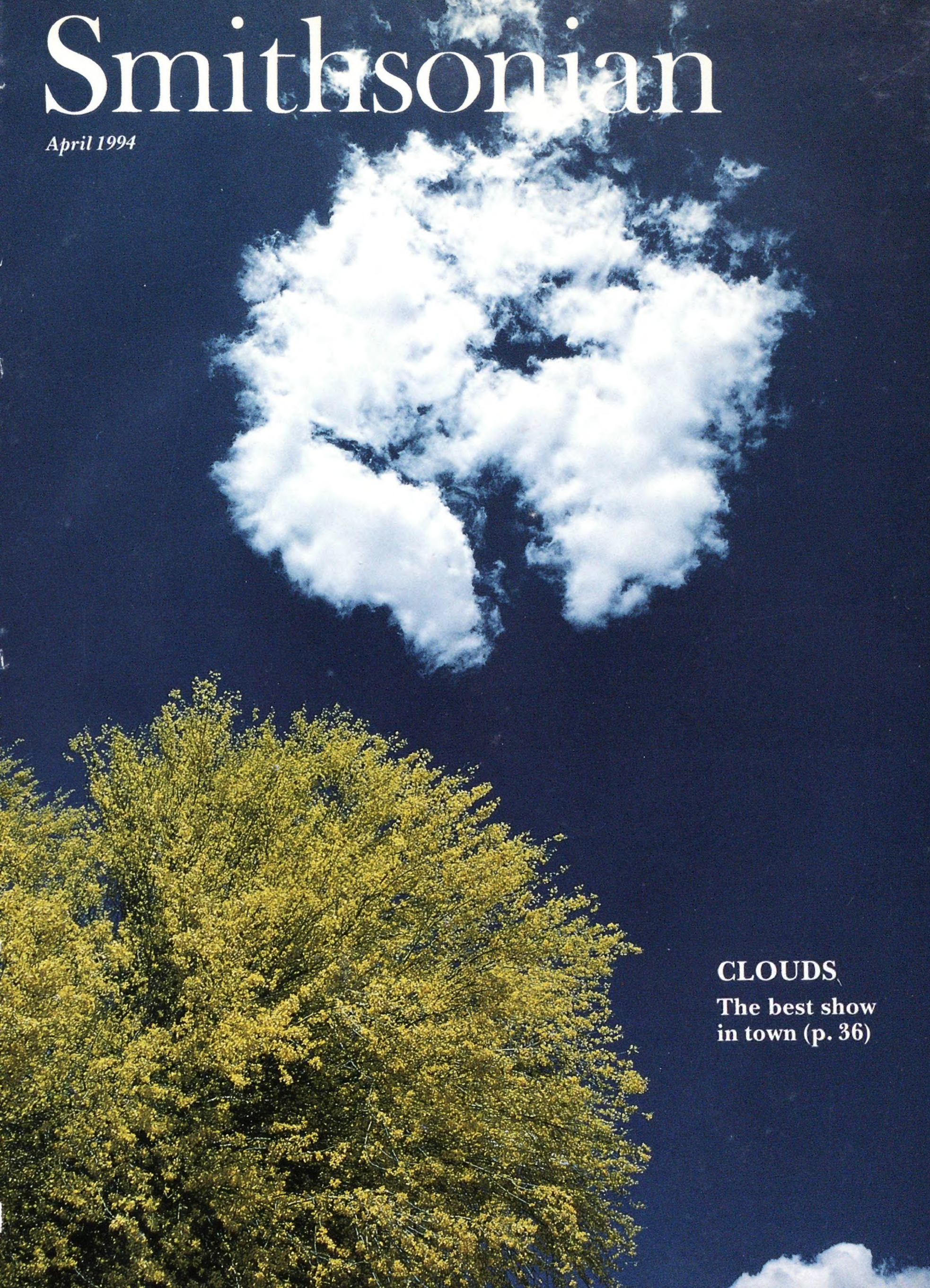
Smithsonian

April 1994



CLOUDS
The best show in town (p. 36)

I can't believe
they gave my promotion
to Kaminsky.

Let him have it, I don't
want all that
responsibility anyway.

He could use the
extra money, a good hair
weave isn't cheap.

And a window office only means
he'll have to watch
the rest of us leave at five.

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Besides, everyone in management develops a nervous tick eventually.

And with a reserved parking space, the boss always knows when you're late.

I can't believe they gave my promotion to Kaminsky.

THIS IS REFRESHMENT™ diet Coke

April 1994

Smithsonian

Volume 25, Number 1

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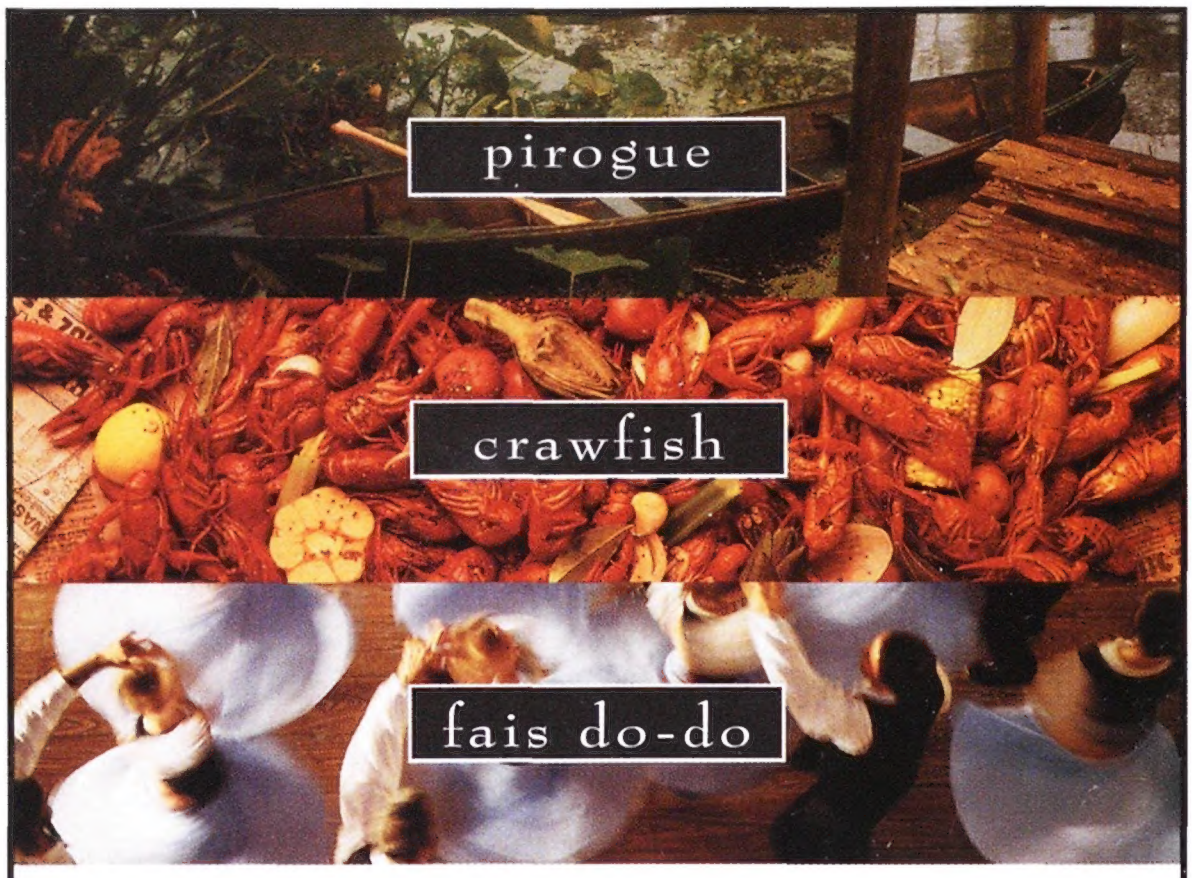

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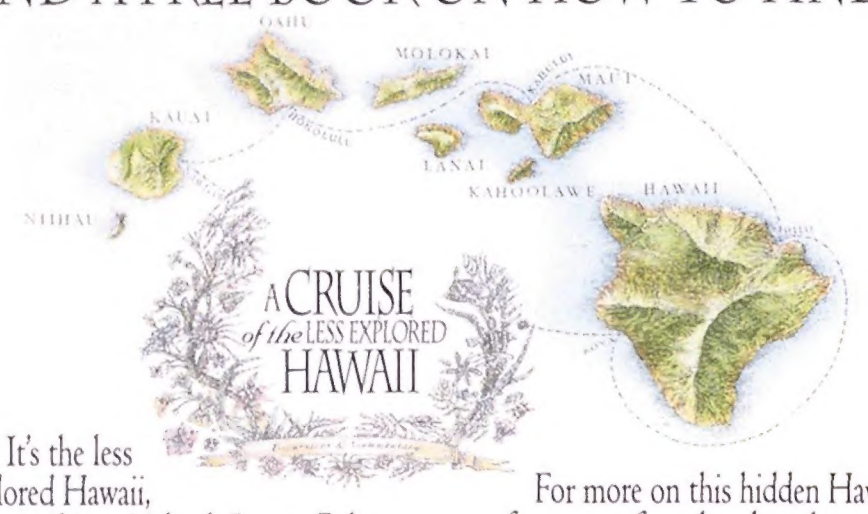

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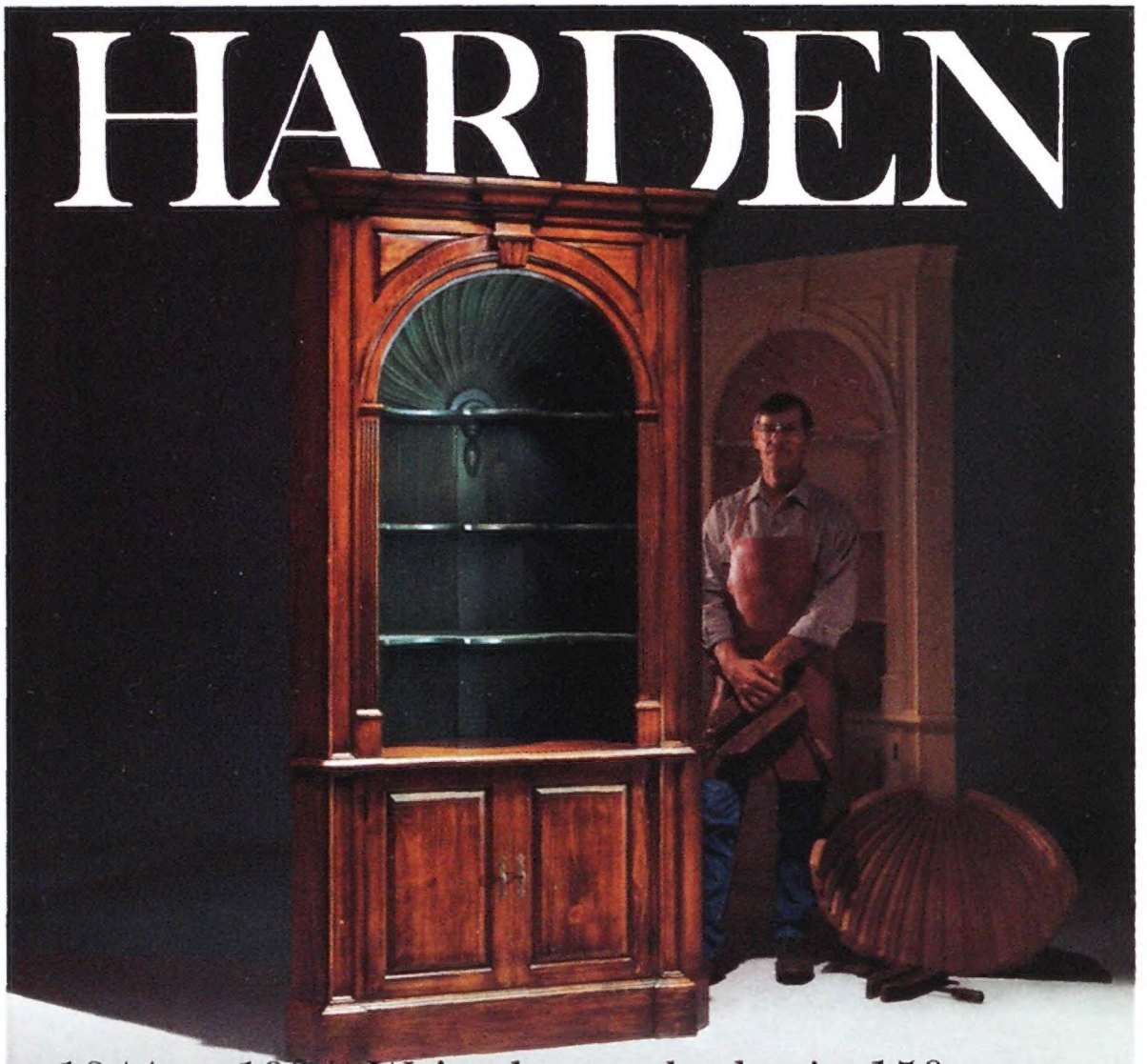

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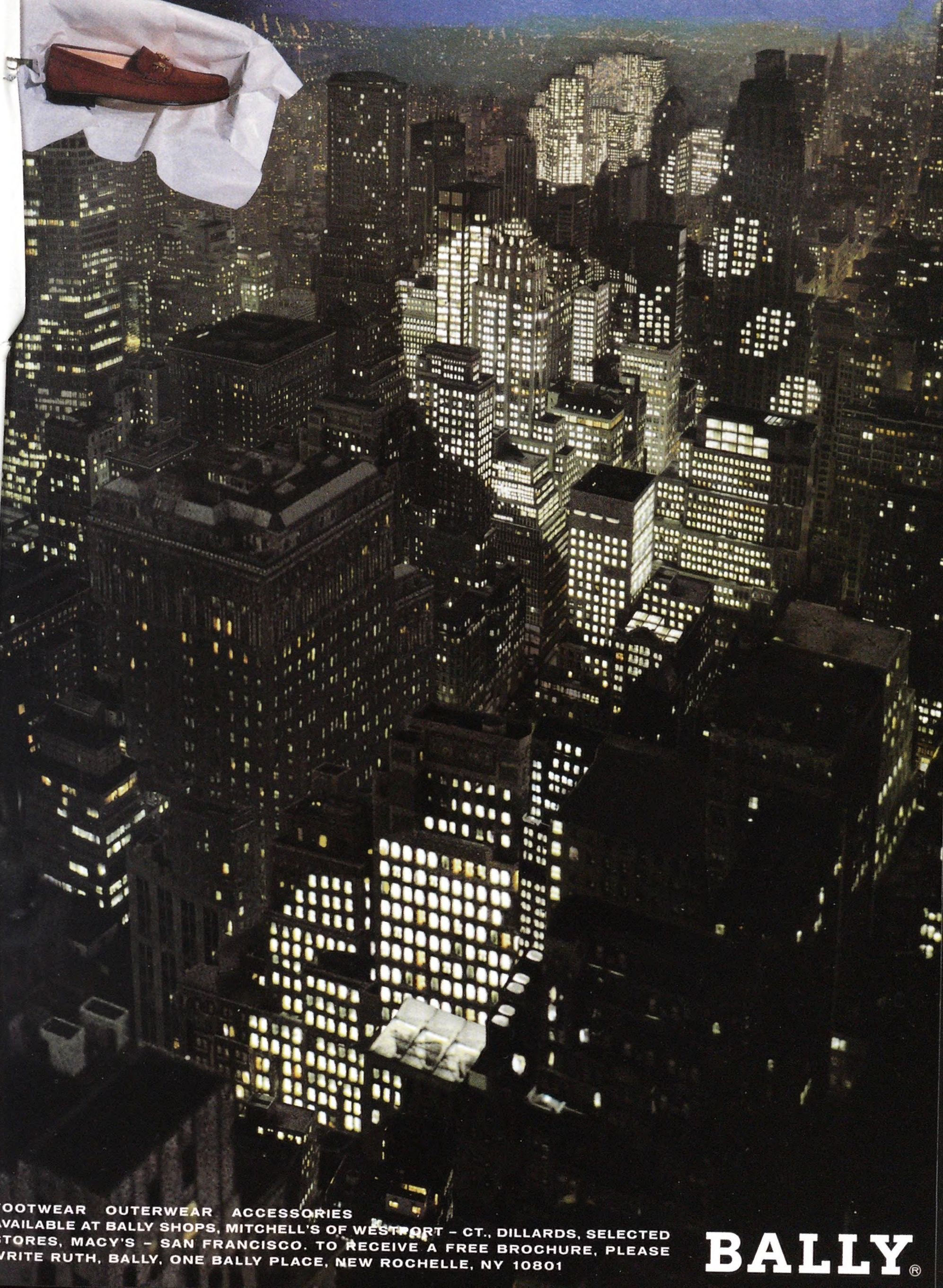
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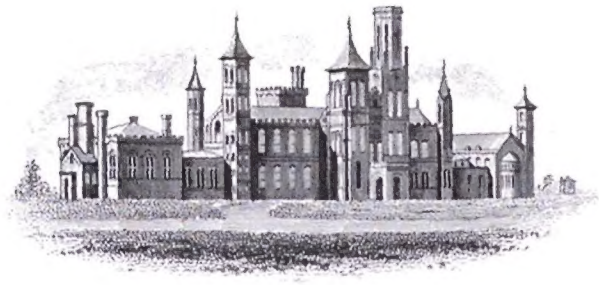
Secretary Adams' comments

Smithsonian horizons



At James Smithson's institution the dynamics of knowledge–"increase and diffusion"–are inseparably linked

The Smithsonian Institution owes its existence to the bequest of a wealthy English scientist, James Smithson. His entire fortune was left to the United States "to found in Washington, under the name of the Smithsonian Institution, an establishment for the increase and diffusion of knowledge." That sturdy Victorian phrase, "increase and diffusion of knowledge," resonates no less strongly to us today than it did to him.

Smithson's papers were tragically destroyed by a fire in the Smithsonian Castle building in 1865. Hence we will never know exactly what he had in mind and can only idly wonder whether he would approve of the uses this country has made of his magnificent gift in what will soon be a century and a half since the Institution's founding, in 1846.

There is no less uncertainty over why he chose the United States, which he had never visited. Science here was in its infancy then; colleges were largely devoted to the general education of gentlemen, and research was overwhelmingly an avocation, not a career. But perhaps a clue is provided by what Smithson saw at home. As a recent account puts it, Oxford and Cambridge were in a "scientific stupor" at the time, their classrooms largely deserted and their scientific chairs chiefly used as sinecures for clergymen. Charles Babbage, an eminent mathematician and inventor of a computer prototype, published his memorable indictment of all this, *Reflections on the Decline of Science in England*, at about the time of Smithson's death. By contrast, at least, the United States may have seemed to hold out hope of the better climate for research that could one day materialize.

Today, of course, research has become a vast and vital field of activity–one in which the United States has easily maintained its world supremacy for two generations. Toward the end of the 19th century, colleges began to evolve into great universities, where disinterested, fundamental research along the entire length of the frontiers of knowledge now is centered. But basic research also is carried on in industrial laboratories, and lines of demarcation are disappearing with universities on the one hand, and with the larger, more practically oriented "development" part of "Research & Development" (R&D) on the other. So where does the "increase of knowledge" part of the Smithsonian's chartered responsibility currently stand in light of these huge and continuing changes?

Much of the American public thinks of the Smithsonian as a diverse but fascinating array of museums, which surely have important parts to play in the diffusion of knowledge but not such obvious roles in its creation. What that view neglects is the dynamic character of knowledge itself. There is no consensually recognized container full of it, from which spoonfuls can be drawn for museum exhibits. Instead, the living part of knowledge is concentrated along its active frontiers. To diffuse knowledge effectively–which means understanding how it moves forward and what its constraints and potentials are–our curators must also be engaged in generating it.

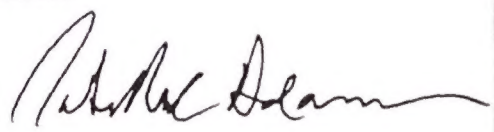
It is, of course, vital to consider the ways in which the Institution's comparative advantages in research have been altered by the larger changes going on around us. Collection-based research, whether in natural history, art or material culture, is an example of a responsibility that cannot be shirked. But drawing a line around that category is not so simple. Whatever the unit–animal, vegetable, mineral or product of human design–it acquires not only its distinguishing features but most of its importance from the context in which it originated, flourished and was perceived or otherwise exercised an influence. Where research fails to address questions of context, a collection is at risk of being truncated and arid.

Field research, accordingly, is one of the Smithsonian's great specialties. To take only the natural history variant: What factors govern the behavior of organisms, their position in food chains and ecosystems, and their capacity to adapt and survive as the context changes? Without collections-based research, to be sure, scientists would not know how to distinguish species as the elementary units of common descent. But the main point is that the laboratory and the field form an integrated unit. And the same applies to the study of history, technology and art.

Another important advantage that the Smithsonian retains for research is its long-term momentum, or staying power. Collections account for some of this, growing in indispensability as they grow in size. But with a combination of federal and private funding, the Institution can fix upon enormously complex and demanding problems, such as mapping the sheetlike clusters of galaxies composing the Universe or determining the composition of tropical forest ecosystems, and devote to them the time and attention–even the succession of scholarly careers–they need and deserve.

Finally, diffusing knowledge is no less a dynamic process than increasing it. Audiences, not passive containers either, challenge our complacent assumptions, offer fresh perspectives, and help us to sweep away the cobwebs of detail in order to identify fundamental questions and priorities. To teach is also to learn.

James Smithson had it right: increase and diffusion belong together. They are fruitfully and inseparably linked at his institution.



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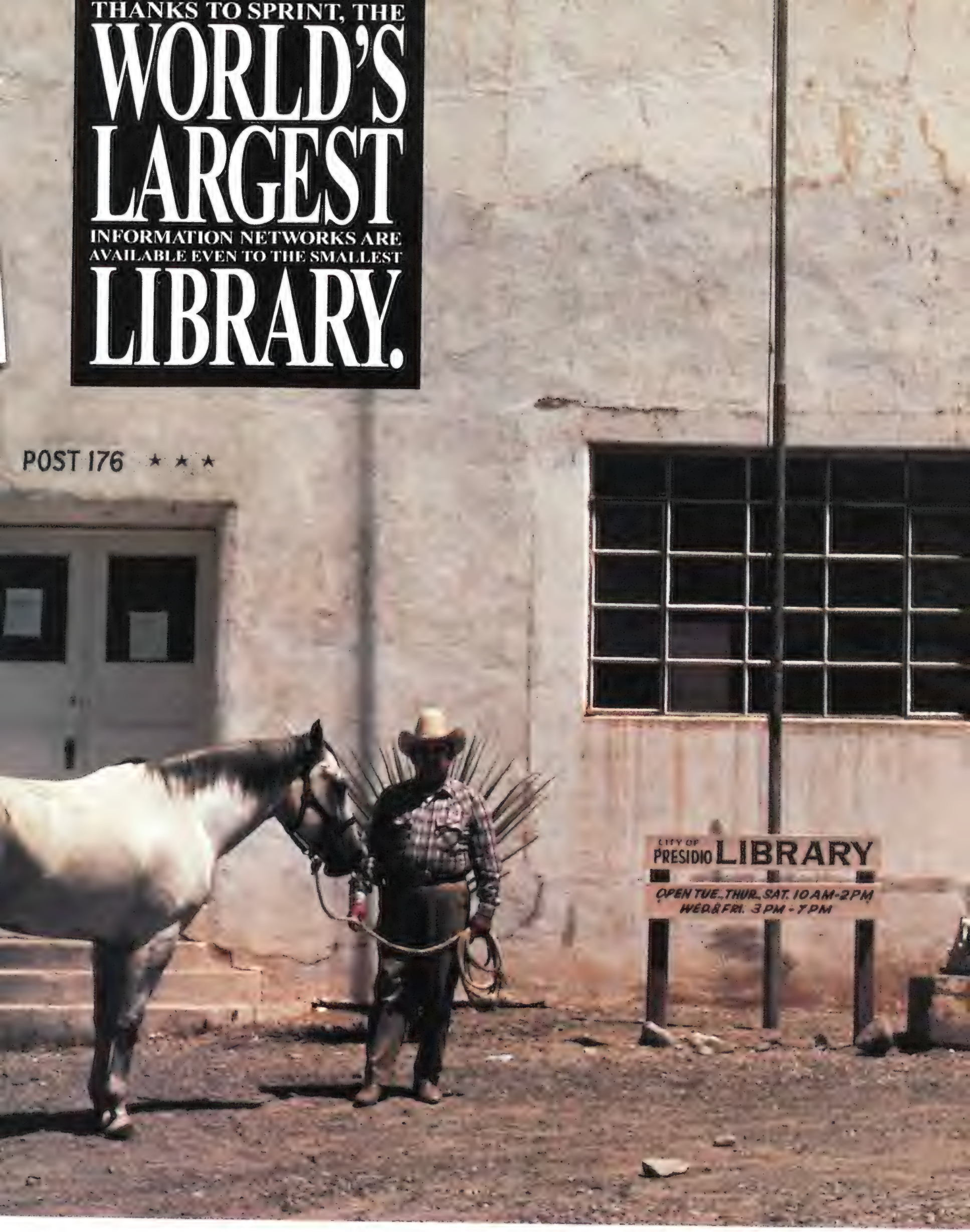

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Letters to the Editor

Frank Lloyd Wright

Dear Sir: Frank Lloyd Wright, featured in your February issue, used his wit to make serious points. In the 1950s he spoke to about 1,300 students and faculty at the University of Wisconsin, where he had studied engineering. He walked out onto the stage, a dramatic figure in his white suit, his silver hair gleaming in the spotlight, and silently gazed around the audience for a long moment.

Finally he spoke: "Ah, these great universities! They take in 20,000 plums and they turn out 20,000 prunes." The house erupted in a thunderous cheer.

While the arbiters of taste were dismissing Wright, the Midwest never lost sight of his genius. Wright houses, not necessarily expensive to build, are the pride of many small towns. We can only guess at what America's urban esthetic lost when Wright's genius was discarded in favor of the Bauhaus masters and Le Corbusier's eccentric fancies.
Rosanne Klass
New York City

Dear Sir: Fallingwater is best appreciated from the exterior. Inside it's a disaster. On the second floor, for example, one must negotiate narrow corridors from one cubbyhole to another–reminiscent of a medieval fortress.

To top it, he eliminated what should have been splendid views of Bear Run from within.
Simone Brocato
Columbus, Georgia

Dear Sir: I very much disapprove of your favorable article on one of the world's super egos. His greatest claim to fame is the Guggenheim Museum, that spiral that destroys the beauty of Fifth Avenue.
James S. Moran
Alexandria, Virginia

Homer Plessy

Dear Sir: On February 23, 1870, a clergyman named Hiram R. Revels became the first African-American to serve in the U.S. Senate, when elected to the Mississippi seat once held by Jefferson Davis.

Within a year after Revels' election, Joseph H. Rainey of South Carolina and Jefferson F. Long of Georgia broke the color line to be seated in the House. By 1899, a total of 22 Southern blacks had served in Congress–and not 16 as in your article.

Blanche K. Bruce of Mississippi, the first black man to serve a full six-year term as a U.S. Senator–from March 4, 1875, to March 3, 1881–was the first black to preside over the Senate, and the first whose signature appeared on paper currency as Registrar of the Treasury.

Many of the 22 African-Americans who served in the U.S. Congress were also editors, college presidents, diplomats and Presidential advisers. They–as well as a multitude of African-American state and local elected officials–are lost in the dustbin of history. These great pioneers deserve to be honored.
Stanley Turkel, Vice President
Society of African-American
Congressional Pioneers
New York City

Dear Sir: Albion W. Tourgee, Plessy's attorney before the Supreme Court in 1896, had been a Union officer in the Civil War and a carpetbagger in North Carolina during Reconstruction; he wrote several novels using racial attitudes as their central theme.
L. H. Blum
Beaumont, Texas

Démineurs

Dear Sir: When my grandparents John and Margaret Foy built their house in Gettysburg in the late 1950s, squarely in the middle of the first day's battle site, several unexploded shells from the Civil War were discovered as the foundation was being excavated.

The story was always a good one to tell visitors, but to my knowledge the possibility of more live shells or ammunition in the area was never viewed as a threat. The endless hours my brother, cousins and I spent playing "war" in the dark old woods across the street (we were "Yanks"; all pricker bushes were "Rebs") could have proven disastrous. Do unexploded Civil War shells still lie in those woods and what is being done to ensure that American battlefields are safe?
Elizabeth A. Foy
Buffalo, New York
The National Park Service deals with unexploded shells (only three, plus one solid shot, were found at Gettysburg in the past 20 years) but does not seek them out. The Archaeological Resources Protection Act prohibits digging on battlefields. Ed.

Dear Sir: Donovan Webster's article brought to mind the brief time I lived in France in 1958 and '59, a third-grader in the USAF base school at Etain.

My father was a sergeant, my mother a German war bride. Commuting to school with my father along country roads, we often saw red-flagged bombs by the roadway, waiting for removal.

We visited Verdun and the Douaumont ossuary. My German uncles and grandfather, who had fought there, cried at the incomprehensible destruction and staggering numbers of dead on all sides.

The curious had scratched away black paint from the ossuary windows, and of course, I too peered in. I will never forget the mounds of human bones; it caused repeated childhood nightmares, a history lesson learned too young.
Claudia Daly Hoyle
Colorado Springs

Dear Sir: I have twice visited Verdun. The highlight both times was the Mémorial de Fleury. I am an unabashed museum nut, and that is the best battlefield museum I have ever seen, presenting a succinct yet thorough story of that terrible conflagration. The focus is on the thousands of young men, regardless of nationality, involved in that awful struggle. Its centerpiece is a full-scale replica of a small portion of the 1916 battlefield. Although strewn with the detritus of war, the replica is sterile–just as it might have appeared in that violent time when all plant life had been blown away, and human survival depended on how far one could burrow underground.
Griffin N. Dodge
Santa Fe

Dear Sir: A peaceful use was found for at least one shell that fell on France in World War I. A spent 75-millimeter shell about the size of those held by the *démineur* shown on page 27 stands near my

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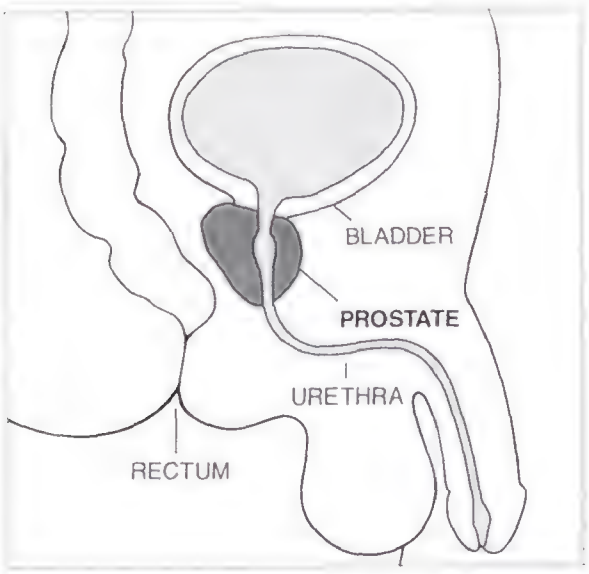

The prostate surrounds part of the urethra, the tube that carries urine from the bladder. As the prostate enlarges, it can squeeze the urethra and cause urinary problems.

It is also important to have regular checkups. *While benign prostate enlargement is not cancer and does not lead to cancer, the two conditions can exist at the same time.*

Remember, only a doctor can evaluate your symptoms and their possible causes. So, if your urinary symptoms are bothering you, don't wait any longer. You may find that your enlarged prostate can be made into a smaller problem.

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PROSCAR is for the treatment of symptomatic benign prostatic hyperplasia and for use by men only.

Your doctor may prescribe PROSCAR if you have a medical condition called benign prostatic hyperplasia or BPH. This occurs only in men.

Please read this information, as well as the leaflet which accompanies your medication, before you start taking PROSCAR. Also, read the leaflet each time you renew your prescription, just in case anything has changed. Remember, this leaflet does not take the place of careful discussions with your doctor. You and your doctor should discuss PROSCAR when you start taking your medication and at regular checkups.

What is BPH?

BPH is an enlargement of the prostate gland. After age 50, most men develop enlarged prostates. The prostate is located below the bladder. As the prostate enlarges, it may slowly restrict the flow of urine. This can lead to symptoms such as:

- a weak or interrupted urinary stream
- a feeling that you cannot empty your bladder completely
- a feeling of delay or hesitation when you start to urinate
- a need to urinate often, especially at night
- a feeling that you must urinate right away.

Treatment options for BPH

There are three main treatment options for BPH:

- **Program of monitoring or "Watchful Waiting".** If a man has an enlarged prostate gland and no symptoms or if his symptoms do not bother him, he and his doctor may decide on a program of monitoring which would include regular checkups, instead of medication or surgery.
- **Medication.** Your doctor may prescribe PROSCAR for BPH. See **"What PROSCAR does"** below.
- **Surgery.** Some patients may need surgery. Your doctor can describe several different surgical procedures for BPH. Which procedure is best depends on your symptoms and medical condition.

What PROSCAR does

PROSCAR lowers levels of a key hormone called DHT (dihydrotestosterone), which is a major cause of prostate growth. Lowering DHT leads to shrinkage of the enlarged prostate gland in most men. This can lead to gradual improvement in urine flow and symptoms over the next several months. However, since each case of BPH is different, you should know that:

- Even though the prostate shrinks, you may NOT see an improvement in urine flow or symptoms.
- You may need to take PROSCAR for six (6) months or more to see whether it helps you.
- Even though you take PROSCAR and it may help you, it is not known whether PROSCAR reduces the need for surgery.

What you need to know while taking PROSCAR

- **You must see your doctor regularly.** While taking PROSCAR, you must have regular checkups. Follow your doctor's advice about when to have these checkups.
- **About side effects.** Like all prescription drugs, PROSCAR may cause side effects. Side effects due to PROSCAR may include impotence (or inability to have an erection) and less desire for sex. Each of these side effects occurred in less than 4% of patients in clinical studies. In some cases side effects went away while the patient continued to take PROSCAR.

Some men taking PROSCAR® (Finasteride) may have a decrease in the amount of semen released during sex. This decrease does not appear to interfere with normal sexual function. Rarely, some men have reported breast swelling and/or tenderness or allergic reactions such as lip swelling and rash.

You should discuss side effects with your doctor before taking PROSCAR and anytime you think you are having a side effect.

- **Checking for prostate cancer.** Your doctor has prescribed PROSCAR for symptomatic BPH and not for cancer—but a man can have BPH and prostate cancer at the same time. Doctors usually recommend that men be checked for prostate cancer once a year when they turn 50 (or 40 if a family member has had prostate cancer). These checks should continue while you take PROSCAR. PROSCAR is not a treatment for prostate cancer.
- **About prostate specific antigen (PSA).** Your doctor may have done a blood test called PSA. PROSCAR can alter PSA values. For more information, talk to your doctor.
- **A warning about PROSCAR and pregnancy.**

PROSCAR is for use by MEN only.

PROSCAR is generally well tolerated in men. However, women who are pregnant, or women who could become pregnant, should avoid the active ingredient in PROSCAR.

If the active ingredient is absorbed by a woman who is pregnant with a male baby, it may cause the male baby to be born with abnormalities of the sex organs. Therefore, any woman who is pregnant or who could become pregnant must not come into direct contact with the active ingredient in PROSCAR.

Two of the ways in which a woman might absorb the active ingredient in PROSCAR are:

Sexual contact. Your semen may contain a small amount of the active ingredient of the drug. If your partner is pregnant, or if you and your partner decide to have a baby, you must stop taking PROSCAR and talk to your doctor. If your partner could become pregnant, proper use of a condom can reduce the risk of exposing her to your semen (discuss this further with your doctor).

Handling broken tablets. Women who are pregnant or who could become pregnant must not handle broken tablets of PROSCAR.

PROSCAR tablets are coated to prevent contact with the active ingredient during normal handling. If this coating is broken, the tablets should not be handled by women who are pregnant or who could become pregnant.

If a woman who is pregnant comes into contact with the active ingredient in PROSCAR, a doctor should be consulted. Remember, these warnings apply only if the woman exposed to PROSCAR is pregnant or could become pregnant.

How to take PROSCAR

Follow your doctor's advice about how to take PROSCAR. You must take it every day. You may take it with or between meals. To avoid forgetting to take PROSCAR, it may be helpful to take it the same time every day.

Do not share PROSCAR with anyone else; it was prescribed only for you.

Keep PROSCAR and all medicines out of the reach of children.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT 'PROSCAR' AND BPH, TALK WITH YOUR DOCTOR. IN ADDITION, TALK TO YOUR PHARMACIST OR OTHER HEALTH CARE PROVIDER.

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fireplace. In summer it serves as a vase.

My aunt, a nurse with the American Expeditionary Forces, brought it back to her home in Missouri. Arriving at Le Havre on November 10, 1918–one day before the Armistice–she stayed several months to nurse sick and wounded soldiers. A patient engraved her shell with his batallion insignia and floral designs; on the base are his initials and hers.

Ruth Eversole
Knoxville, Tennessee

The junkoholic

Dear Sir: As any junk junkie knows, when Neary really needs his "lovely 12-inch-diameter barrel clamp" he won't find it. Then, within a day of having solved the problem with duct tape, the clamp will mysteriously appear in plain sight–atop his favorite junk pile.

Also well known by our ilk is the Junkie's Curse. If–in a fit of madness and/or to save his marriage–he breaks the code and actually disposes of a piece of junk, within one week he will have urgent need for exactly that piece.

This comes from one who has broken the code and lived to regret it.

Rodney D. Brown
River Edge, New Jersey

Dear Sir: February 1 began in the dark, a typical humdrum day in Virginia with that soporific 50-mile drive up I-95 to Washington. Then, right in the middle of M Street, N.W., was a beautiful tar-covered ball peen hammer, its handle only slightly split. I made it mine. Next, in my wife's office was the new SMITHSONIAN with John Neary's article.

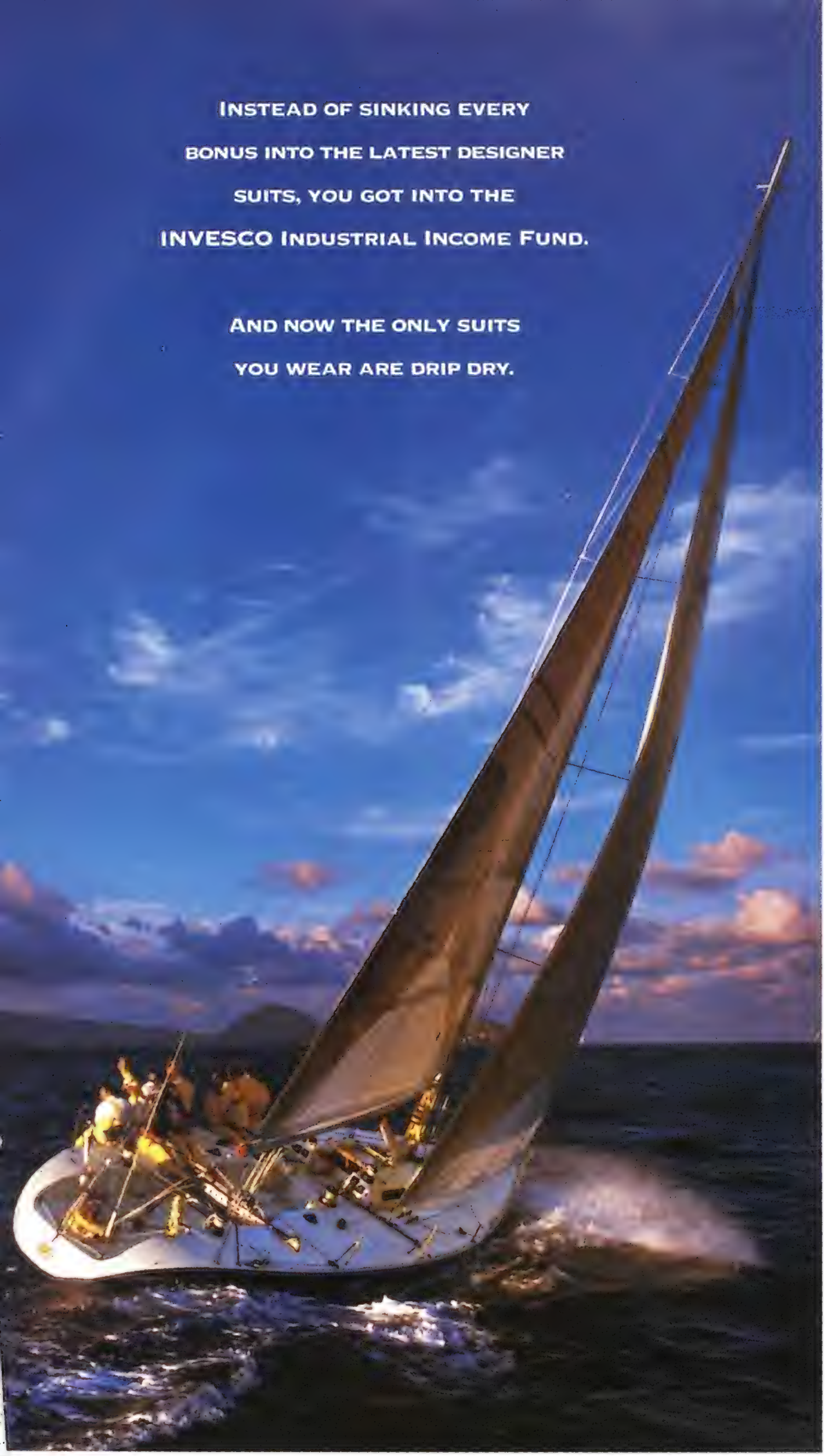
When we lived in South Arlington, I gave up jogging to and from work. The daily pickings–fenders, washers, bolts, screwdrivers–were too heavy, their gleaning too time-consuming. Occasionally I had to phone my wife from the Jefferson Memorial to come and haul me home with some beautilitarian treasure dragged from the 14th Street Bridge.

Clayton E. Ray
Falmouth, Virginia

Korean renaissance

Dear Sir: In Seoul from 1968 to '72, my husband served in the Agency for International Development mission. We American Women's Club volunteers spoke six languages among us and were available to take foreign visitors or diplomatic groups on tours of the National Museum.

My limited field of expertise was the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Five Year	18.08%
Ten Year	16.39%
Fifteen Year	17.30%
Twenty Year	16.09%

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[1] For the five- and ten-year periods ended 12/31/93, Lipper Analytical Services ranked the fund #1 of 51 and #1 of 20 equity-income funds respectively.
[2] Smart Money's designation of the fund as a "safe bet for the '90s" based on proprietary analysis of ten-year and year-to-date risk-adjusted performance and fund composition.
[3] Morningstar proprietary rating reflects historical risk-adjusted performance for Industrial Income Fund as of 12/31/93. The ratings are subject to change every month. Morningstar ratings are calculated comprising funds classified as three- and ten-year average annual returns with appropriate fee adjustments and a risk factor that reflects performance relative to three-month Treasury bill monthly returns. Of equity income funds rated, 50, 10% receive Morningstar's "5-star" rating.
[4] Investor's Business Daily ranked the fund #7 among their top 25 Income Funds for 1990-1992 as of 12/9/93.
Total return assumes reinvestment of all dividends and capital gain distributions. Investment return and principal value will fluctuate so that, when redeemed, an investor's shares may be worth more or less than their original cost. As of January 1994, John Kaweske is no longer a co-manager of either the Industrial Income Fund or the Strategic Health Sciences Portfolio. INVESCO Funds Group, Inc., Distributor.

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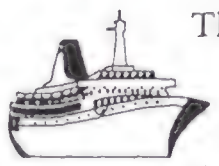

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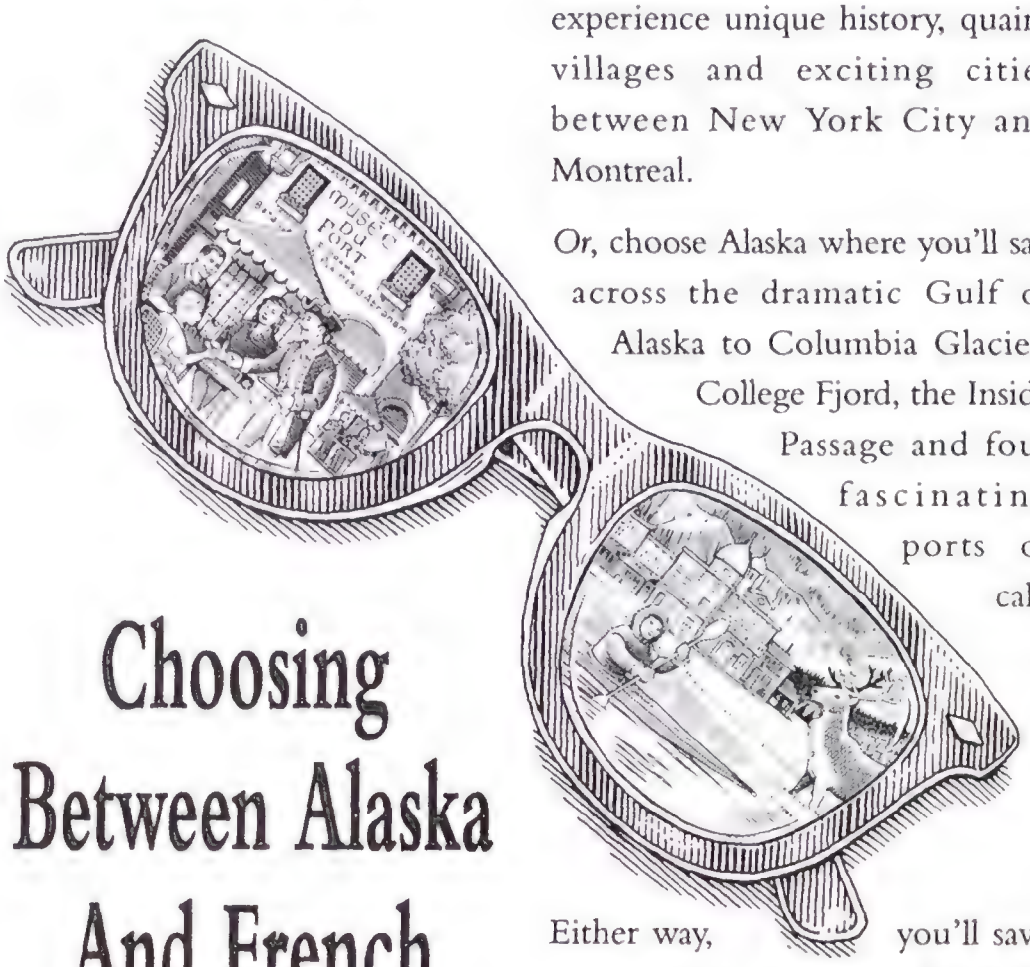

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beautiful Korean celadon. The traditional art of humorous tiger paintings was our favorite subject–but we'll never forget the sign in the gatehouse window at the museum: "English speaking ladies are available."
Ann W. Hunter
Annandale, Virginia

Santiago de Compostela

Dear Sir: To a medievalist, the way to Compostela is primarily a literary pilgrimage. Charlemagne's invasion of Spain, mentioned as a part of the mystery of Santiago, was the occasion of Count Roland's heroic rear-guard action at Roncesvalles in the Pyrenees, source of the epic *La Chanson de Roland.*
Robert L. Chapman
Madison, New Jersey

Smithsonian horizons

Dear Sir: Disney's America is not the real thing. Will a family who has spent megabucks there go to see the real thing at Mount Vernon, Monticello, Jamestown and Yorktown? The recreational dollar is driven largely by children's preferences. Need more be said?

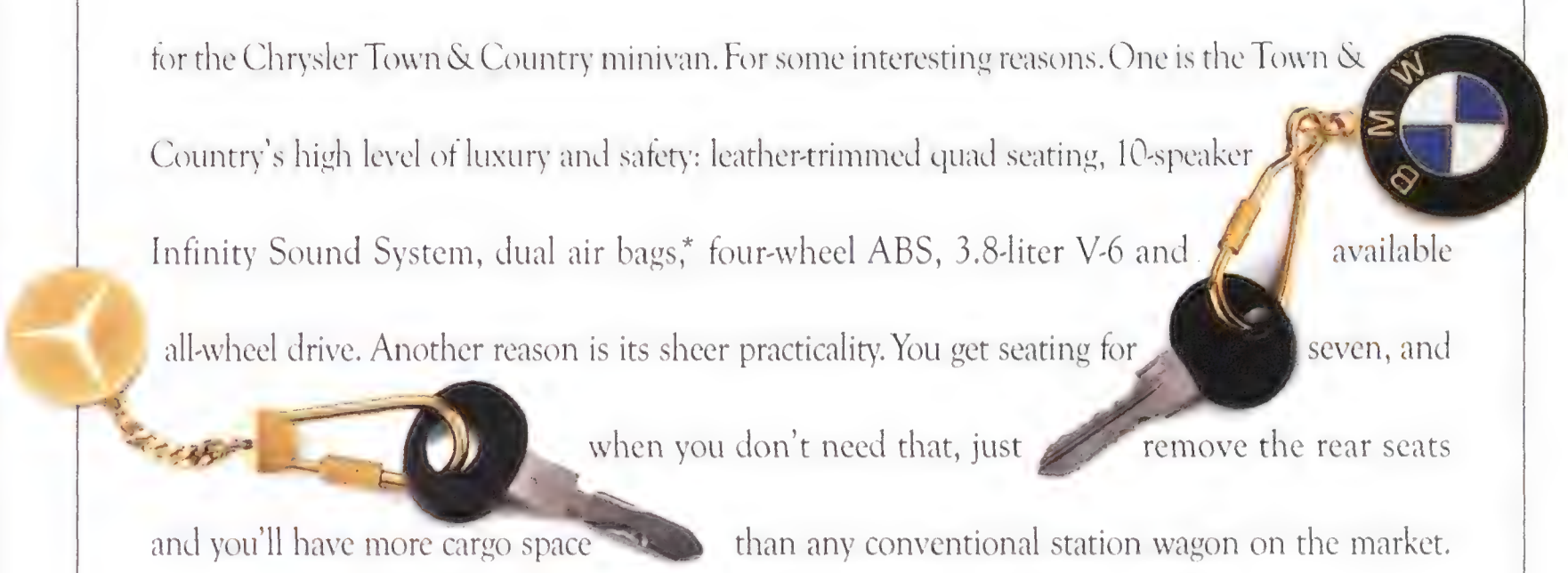
I agree that we are ignorant of our history, and that our schools' crises don't help. Therefore, let us vigorously, urgently, earnestly and creatively continue to develop methods that schools and museums might use to better teach history–and geography, reading, math, science, social sciences and so on.
Sandy Lenthall
Williamsburg, Virginia

Dear Sir: So little history accompanies the early teachings of our children. My commitment to my grandson is to supply opportunities for firsthand experience. With his first steps and wide eyes, he was introduced to the Smithsonian dinosaurs; the wonders of flight; the magic of stones. George Washington, Fredericksburg, Desert Storm. Rain forests of Oregon, shore life in Florida, the great Columbia Gorge, the Chesapeake Bay.

Just back from Epcot, where I was shown by a 6-year-old the art of communicating by computer, I found it rewarding that you tell us there is room for all, and that we will all benefit. The world according to Disney is perhaps one of the few places where violence and anger are set aside; where we see through the eyes of all children a magic kingdom.
Marie Beasley
Richland, Washington

It's not surprising that people have been trading in cars for the Town & Country minivan. What's surprising is which cars.

BMWs, Mercedes, Acuras, Jaguars, Lincolns, Cadillacs, some interesting cars are being traded in for the Chrysler Town & Country minivan. For some interesting reasons. One is the Town & Country's high level of luxury and safety: leather-trimmed quad seating, 10-speaker Infinity Sound System, dual air bags,* four-wheel ABS, 3.8-liter V-6 and available all-wheel drive. Another reason is its sheer practicality. You get seating for seven, and when you don't need that, just remove the rear seats and you'll have more cargo space than any conventional station wagon on the market.



But perhaps the most important reason people accustomed to great cars enjoy the Town & Country is because it handles like a great car itself. One test drive and even the most discerning luxury car owners realize they don't have to compromise anything to own a vehicle that's stunningly practical. Least of all, their standards.

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Around the Mall and beyond

Will we ever enjoy the song and color of migratory birds like we used to? These scientists are doing their part

It's spring, and the scarlet tanager in the trees is in his brilliant breeding plumage–red and black. Everyone sees him instantly. Everyone, that is, but me. "Just to the right of those dogwood flowers," says Dan Petit. "About six meters up. . .there! See that flash of red?" exclaims Dan's wife, Lisa.

"You're looking too far to the left," says the intern, a college girl named Jennifer Jones who has the world's sharpest eyes. I continue to stare through my binoculars, refocus them just a little, move them slowly past a blur of fresh greenery and fuzzy pink dogwood blossoms. The others murmur to one another about how bright the tanager is, and where do you think the nest is, and should we try to see inside. And then they wait during my endless, embarrassed striving until I can't stand their courteous patience any longer.

"I've got it," I lie, striking the exact tone of confidence that would fit the role I am playing–Knowledgeable Columnist Joining Science Types on Bird Walk at Smithsonian Environmental Research Center. "Clear as day. Beautiful!"

Everyone relaxes, and we continue our walk. The Center–"SERC," it's called–is a lovely sprawl of hardwood forest, old and new, where brooklets dribble into the Chesapeake Bay after running a gauntlet of little dams where samples are taken for testing. I've written about it often and would like to be forced to visit it at least ten times a year. But my burdensome Yankee conscience nags that a place so enjoyable can't be a place where one should spend so many days.

This time I have a special reason to sample some of SERC's 1,800 acres. I am the guest of another, relatively new program, the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center (SMBC). I'd talked to director Russell Greenberg at the Bird Center's office–a trailer at the National Zoo–and am now learning more about what this small Smithsonian group does, and why.

I had discovered that over the past 25 years our migratory birds have declined sadly in numbers. A U.S. Fish and Wildlife survey estimates that 75 percent of the migrant birds that breed in the Northeast are severely diminished. But besides the formal reports, every year we learn firsthand about the loss of birdsong and of glimpses of bright color whenever we walk through Washington's Rock Creek Park or the edges of our own fields, or when we explore a woodland like this one at SERC.

SMBC and SERC are working together to gather and sort information about the breeding season and the dwindling numbers of birds at sites along migration routes. In the southern range a natural site for SMBC research is the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute in Panama. Another is in Chiapas, Mexico.

It's possible at least to slow the decline, say the SMBC people. They're investigating the ways land is cleared in the southern ranges of the birds, and the way the birds change their migration routes to get around exploding human population centers.

"We try to see how forest areas look to the birds as they fly over," says Lisa Petit, a research biologist at SMBC. "And we keep tabs on the problems they have in breeding and nesting–predators and parasites–the cats and crows and blue jays, the cowbirds that dump their eggs in warbler nests for the songbirds to hatch and feed. Mostly, the problem is too much urbanization." That means suburbs, highways, parking lots, shopping malls. The more of them, the fewer the birds. In the tropics, agriculture and deforestation are also a threat.

It makes sense to have SMBC in Washington instead of in the field, since a big part of its job is to synthesize information and make sure policymakers can understand it. And being at the National Zoo gives SMBC good opportunities to educate the public. In May 1993, the Center organized the first annual International Migratory Bird Day (the second Saturday in May). Hillary and Chelsea Clinton attended the program at the Zoo, and a hundred other events took place across North and South America.

This year International Migratory Bird Day will be celebrated in North America on May 14. Birdwalks, habitat restoration projects, fundraising wildlife-art auctions, fairs and the like will be sponsored by local chapters of the National Audubon Society and other conservation groups across the United States and Canada. At the National Zoo, there will be appearances of live migratory birds, "avian" arts and crafts, and demonstrations of field research techniques. SMBC also gets the word out with fliers and brochures, some in Spanish as well as English. They join a shower of materials from other research organizations and universities, for the loss of migratory birds seems to touch everyone.

I went through one nicely presented SMBC booklet entitled *Birds Over Troubled Forests*, which has already gone into two editions. A painting and description of a little warbler, the blackpoll, stirred me, partly because I'd heard that it bred in the White Mountains of my own much-beloved New Hampshire. I sought out its story from the Bird Center's director Greenberg and found an extraordinary adventure tale.

The blackpoll warbler is so tiny that you could mail three for only 29 cents. It breeds in the White Mountains, all right, and also throughout much of Canada and up into Alaska. Nipped by autumn's frosts and feeling the urge to head south, the blackpoll warbler feeds voraciously, building great gobs of yellow fat, which will nourish it during the long flight. The blackpoll gets so heavy that it can barely take off, but once under way, it leaves the continent of North America anywhere between Nova Scotia and Maryland and flies some 2,000 miles over the ocean to the northern coast of South America.

This plucky little bird flies nonstop unless bad weather forces it down on a West Indies island. But the blackpoll seems to be a pretty good meteorologist because it generally avoids storms and in fact climbs to 16,000 feet to get a boost from the favorable winds up there. Somehow it grabs what oxygen is available in that thin, frigid air. (Back in my own flying days, the rule was to don your oxygen mask at 10,000 feet.)

The blackpoll's nonstop ocean flight is extraordinary. Other species may drift southward idly, feeding on the way, paus-

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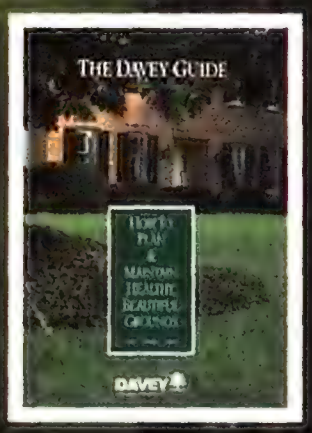


DAVEY
TREE AND LAWN BEAUTY

The tiny blackpoll warbler's nonstop flight from New England to South America is the metabolic equivalent of a human sprinting four-minute miles for 80 hours.

ing, as it were, to sightsee. They're the ones that I am striving to see this splendid morning at SERC. "There's a tree hole," says Jennifer.

Dan, who is a research fellow at SERC, raises a long pole with a small mirror on the end of it–a giant dentist's mirror–to get a look inside. Nothing.

"Be great for a prothonotary warbler," says Lisa, "if it was over water. Prothonotaries," she adds in my direction, "live in swamps."

"Right," I say. I remembered them from a bird book but didn't know how to pronounce their name. Accent the second syllable.

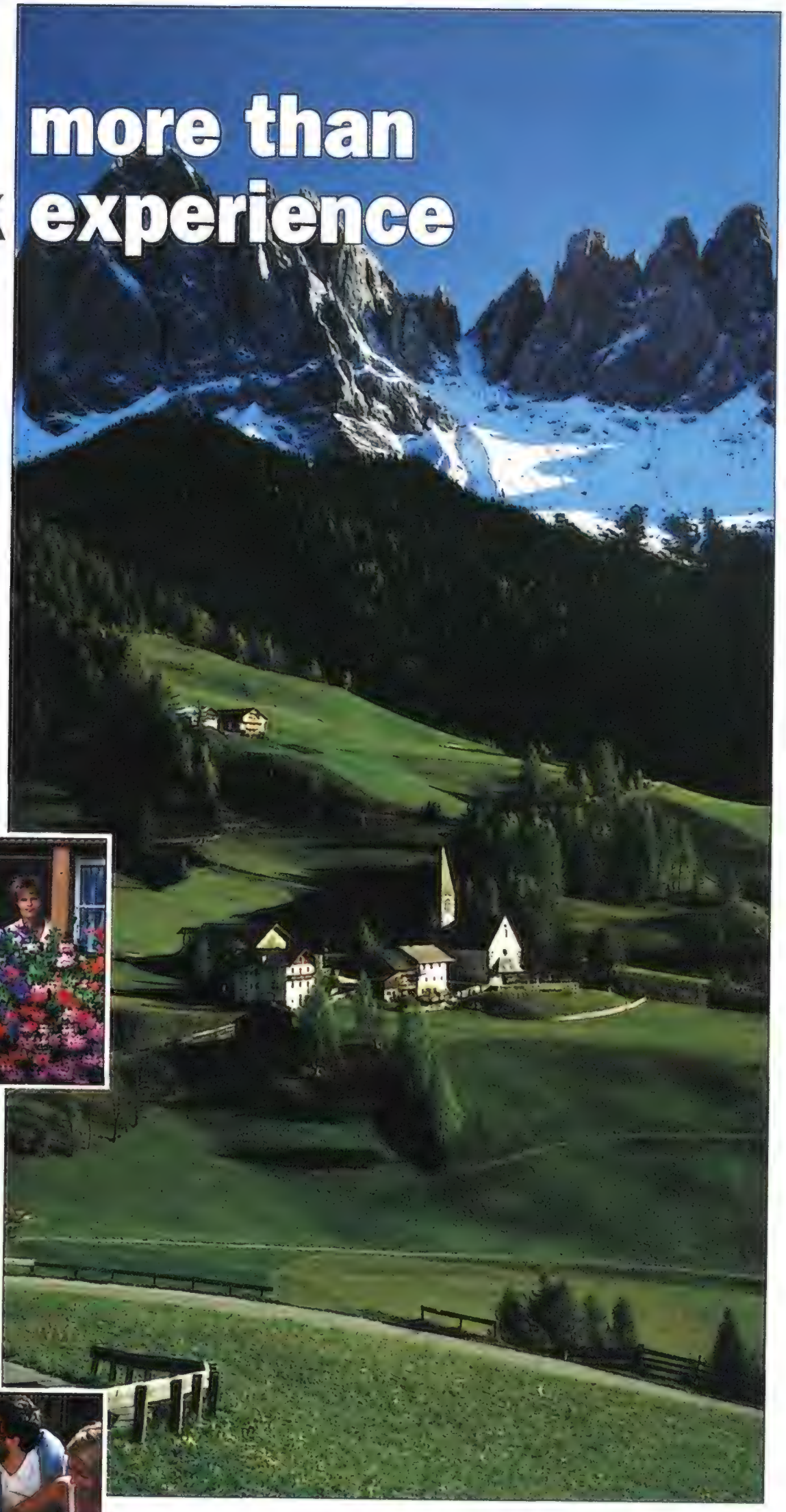
We walk on, slowly, through second-growth hardwoods, then into the old growth of huge trees, draped with long, ropy vines–Tarzan vines–reaching down from the high forest canopy where the sunlight strikes. But my guides are looking low, at head-high bushes beside the trail.

"There," says Jennifer, ever the first to see things. "Cardinal nest." With urging, I make it out, a clump in a bush. Cardinals nest low down. They're big, tough birds without much fear. Dan braves blackberry thorns to investigate the nest. Eggs but no cowbird's egg.

"Cardinal eggs are bigger," says Lisa. "So parasitism doesn't bother them as much." Little warblers, on the other hand, faithfully hatch and rear huge, noisily demanding cowbirds along with their own young for, as Lisa says, "birds work on the squeaky-wheel principle."

I should know all this but, enraptured by the fresh for-

Go for a peak more than experience



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est, the smells of spring, the chirps and calls from all around, I forget all I've known before and simply move along with the others, soaking up all I can hear.

Dan steps back onto the trail, away from the nest. "My scent won't bother the parent birds," he says, "but it might attract a mammal–a raccoon, maybe. Mammals tear the nests apart. Snakes and birds just grab the eggs. We try to minimize visits to active nests, so I'll come back tomorrow."

We spot three wood thrush nests, all together, low like the cardinal's. I am shown an ovenbird's nest, a dome of dead leaves. I hear the chipping voices of tanagers communicating. Other birds, too. They don't sing until they're laying claim to a territory and luring a mate.

As this serene morning passes, I realize that the Petits, and other researchers working in the field for the Smithsonian, don't just try to see birds. They read an entire forest or park or hedgerow like a book, learning from every faint sound, from every little clump of a nest, from droppings beside a bush, from animal tracks, from the sight of a snake. . .

"There's a snake on that bough," says Jennifer. I finally make out its drooping tail. A little garter snake. The Petits leave it alone. They don't mess with nature, just keep tabs on it.

In October I touched base with Dan and Lisa to see what the southward migration would be like. Cool and beautiful, is what. We followed a trail through golden trees and saw old nests that seemed to have withstood the breeding season. "If a nest looks trampled–that is, tramped down by bird feet–it probably was home to a family," Lisa said. "When we check on nests in the breeding season, we look for signs of a successful brood. Of course the best sign is to see the young birds standing on the rim of the nest, ready to fly."

We walked to the edge of the swamp, which you can cross to a wooded island on a plank footbridge. "The island serves as a stepping stone to the forest," said Dan. "It works well to keep migrants moving. Almost as well as strips of forest linking one woodlot to the next." That's the perfect setup for migrants, and much of SMBC's education program is aimed at maintaining those ribbons of forest that migrating birds can follow.

For me, the magical moment of migration came at the edge of SERC's swamp, where forest met canebrake. Even I could hear the chirping of birds and see them cluster on branches and flip overhead in erratic flight. "Listen for the chickadees," said Dan. "They don't migrate, but in the fall they flock together, along with titmice, and the migrants flock with them until nightfall and then move on. So when you hear chickadees you'll probably be able to see migrants."

I heard plenty. And then, carefully guided by Lisa, I saw and identified an honest-to-God warbler without having to lie about it. It was a myrtle, or yellow-rump. As I looked at this little bird on a distant tree, it turned around on its perch and there, sure enough, was the yellow splash on its tail.

And so, having put in these hours at SERC, and tasted a small triumph and realized the devastating prospect of the approaching "silent spring," I'm ready to volunteer for SMBC any old time. Take me! I'm yours!

Such as I am, that is.

Edwards Park

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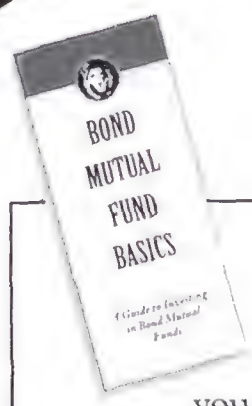

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The object at hand

Design for Confederate battle flag was created after the Battle of Bull Run. This flag, in NMAH, was taken from a North Carolina regiment at Gettysburg.

A famous flag has a career as a contrary symbol of courage and revolt–and outright racism

The flag in question is a St. Andrew's Cross, with 13 stars against a red field. The red is for courage; the 13 stars are for the 11 states of the Confederacy plus 2 more–Missouri and Kentucky, which the Confederacy hoped to call its own. The South surrendered 129 years ago, and some of its territory was occupied by Northern armies for a decade. Then it was absorbed back into the Union whence it had seceded.

You'd think that would have been the end of it. But not at all. Today, one way or another, for better or for worse, the battle flag of the Confederacy refuses to be gone. The Smithsonian's National Museum of American History has one on display, the one pictured above. The Museum of the Confederacy, in Richmond, has an extensive exhibit of Confederate flags and other memorabilia. This relic of the tragic War Between the States keeps turning up as decoration on beach towels, belt buckles, capes and motorcycles, as well as flag-bedecked bumper stickers proclaiming the driver to be a "dern tootin'" Rebel.

And that is only the start. At Harvard, where by tradition the winds of freedom blow without restriction, a female student not long ago hung a Confederate flag out the window of her dormitory–and stirred up a furor of meetings and protests and counterprotests and soul searchings and publicity. The flag stayed where it was.

It is more than understandable that many African-Americans are offended by the flag's institutional use. Last July in the U.S. Senate, after the senators had rubber-stamped their perennial approval of an insignia for the United Daughters of the Confederacy that included a Confederate flag, Carol Moseley-Braun, the freshman senator from Illinois, threatened a filibuster and then, reducing a fellow senator to tears with her anger and eloquence, got the approval rescinded. Objecting to the flag as a symbol of the effort to preserve slavery, she said the issue "is about race. It is about racial symbols . . . and the single most painful episode in American history."

The particular flag that so exercises America began not as the first chosen flag of the Confederacy–a bestarred national banner with broad white and red stripes–but as a practical battle emblem. Because of the dust raised during the first Battle of Bull Run, Confederate general P. G. T. Beauregard's officers could not distinguish the new flag from the Yankee Stars and Stripes, and so could not be sure if approaching soldiers were reinforcements or the enemy. Beauregard commissioned a distinctive battle flag for the Army of Northern Virginia. Versions of the ANV flag, some with 11 stars, spread through the armies of the South until it became, de facto, the premier flag of the Rebel cause.

When the war was over, Southern romanticism gave birth to a postwar Lost Cause movement, which for Southern whites elevated the "embattled emblem" to the status of sacred relic, a symbol of Southern bravery in battle. During Reconstruction, when the South was occupied by Northern armies, the Lost Cause legend helped rationalize the war's loss as one to an overpowering oppressor. As years passed, the movement exalted the Confederacy's memory by idealizing the conflict, sentimentalizing slavery and sanctifying its heroes and symbols in painting, poetry and books of history. In an 1871 print entitled *Lost Cause*, a battle flag looms like a divine specter above a soldier's melancholy homecoming.

Above the Mason-Dixon line, until 1898, the flag was despised as an emblem of sedition and slavery. But when Southern valor again went on display in the Spanish-American War, that began to change. The way was prepared for the first large-scale reunions of Blue and

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can go hours at

a time

without saying a

word. And yet,

she still

knows exactly what

he's thinking.

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Gray veterans, most notably in Gettysburg in 1913 when they mingled together as old soldiers, looking back on hardship and bloodshed shared. As a full measure of reconciliation, the U.S. War Department returned its captured battle flags without rancor "to the men who bore them."

The Confederate battle flag was on its way to a provocative career in 20th-century American culture, not only as an emblem of racism and states' rights nationalism, but as an all-purpose symbol of revolt, defiance, militancy and even general hell-raising. A big publicity boost in the late 1930s came from the reception of *Gone with the Wind*. Antebellum nostalgia was again fashionable. For white Southerners, the promotional round of parades and promenades accompanying the movie's 1939 premiere in Atlanta stirred national interest in the ordeal of the South and the hoop-skirted charms of the Confederacy.

Soon Southern G.I.'s were carrying the flag with them to the far-flung battlefields of World War II. Its unofficial presence was accepted as a special Southern thing, like a drawl or eating possum.

After World War II, militant states' rights solidarity was aggravated by the renewal of Yankee intervention on behalf of integration. During a period that historians call the South's "Second Reconstruction," the antebellum cause of states' rights and racism was revived, setting the stage for the Rebel flag's debut in 20th-century politics. The 1948 Democratic National Convention produced not only Harry Truman's nomination but a third party Dixiecrat candidate for President, South Carolina governor (now Senator) J. Strom Thurmond. During the Dixiecrat Convention the St. Andrew's Cross of Stars on a red field became a flagrant bit of agitprop. Came November and Thurmond garnered only 39 electoral votes, but his supporters had resurrected Confederate oratory, railing against the federal government's attempt to "dominate the country by force."

Its defiant display to protest the civil rights movement extended on through the 1950s, including its incorporation into the Georgia state flag in 1956. But as America's "rebel" banner, the famous flag was also branching out in other, if related, directions. The first and worst of these was its use as a sign of Jim Crow militancy–in the 1960s, for the first time in the 20th century the Ku Klux Klan regularly paraded with it. Rather than confining the flag's role to symbolizing white supremacy, however, that use led to other, less-provocative displays.

Despite what it stood for in the hands of the KKK, the flag was a Southern cross thrust into the face of government authority, and soon its presence began to reflect a tradition of glorifying "outlaw heroes." Swiftly it spread as a badge of youthful rebellion, visible on the flanks of stock cars, on the jackets of "American by Birth, Rebel by Choice" bikers, and in concert with country, bluegrass and rockabilly musicians. Flying the flag, sometimes in bizarre places, sometimes for inscrutable reasons, became a fad. It was carried by Shriners in a New York City parade, unfurled during an Atlantic City beauty contest and firmly fixed atop the State House in Boston, Massachusetts.

Of course, the flag has most consistently been flaunted on the wrong side of the civil rights struggle. At Oxford, Mississippi, where state authorities and a mob obstructed the admission of James Meredith to the state university, confrontation bristled with enough armored vehicles, soldiers in battle dress–and Rebel flags–to give the impression that the Civil War centennial then being observed might result in a more authentic reenactment than anyone dared imagine. Some kind of high-water mark came on June 11, 1963. That was when Alabama governor George Wallace "stood in the schoolhouse door" of the state university in Tuscaloosa, physically blocking its integration by marshals from the U.S. Department of Justice.

Today, with the world nearer to the millennium than it is to the Civil War's centennial, the Rebel flag is still passing along multiple meanings. Confederate flags parade before nostalgic columns of Civil War reenactors. An outlaw Confederate flag festooned "General Lee" (the law-defying stock car of the long-running television series *The Dukes of Hazzard*). It appears painted on album covers or backdrops of Southern rock groups like Alabama and the Marshall Tucker Band. At truck stops Rebel-flag hucksterism abounds. Some truckers have joined numbers of bikers and Southern rockers in using Confederate kitsch as fashion accessory.

Nor has General Beauregard's flag stayed in the New World. According to Gerhard Lack, director of the German Confederate Civil War Research Center in Munich, the flag has been used by neo-Nazis and skinheads. But it is also an international symbol of rebeldom that European youth has associated with rugged American individualism generally and Elvis in particular. Some interest stems from a revival of ethnic nationalism and objection to centralized authority. Today Confederate flags can be seen in a number of European countries.

Since 1983, when black students at the University of Mississippi forced the school to discontinue use of the Rebel flag as its official symbol, civil rights sentiment has been turning the tables on the flag by protesting it. In the late 1980s a resolution by a regional office of the NAACP aimed to eliminate the official flying of the flag in Alabama, Mississippi, South Carolina and Georgia. Just lately the long-running debate about whether the flag should make an appearance in Atlanta during the 1996 Olympics has been heating up again.

It is the Confederate battle flag's adaptability that has enabled it to survive. One way or another, as a shifting symbol, it connects Americans to the most enduring trauma of our past. If the "embattled emblem" is emblematic of any one thing, it's that, long after Appomattox, the Civil War in America's heart goes on.

Alan Wellikoff

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Begin your visit at the Smithsonian Information Center's Associates' Reception Desk, open 9 A.M.- 4 P.M. daily, in the Castle. The Court dining room, located in the National Museum of Natural History, offers buffet service daily, 11 A.M.- 3 P.M. The Castle's Commons dining room will be closed through April.

Most Smithsonian museums are open 10 A.M.- 5:30 P.M. daily. Hours at the National Zoo are 9 A.M.- 4:30 P.M. daily for buildings, and 8 A.M.- 6 P.M. for grounds through April 14. Starting April 15, grounds will be open 8 A.M.- 8 P.M.

Smithsonian Craft Show

The 12th annual Smithsonian Craft Show, sponsored by the Women's Committee of the Smithsonian Associates, will be held April 14-17 in the Andrew W. Mellon Auditorium, 1301 Constitution Avenue, N.W., across from the National Museum of American History. Ninety-four artists will exhibit and sell work in a variety of media. There will be an admission charge. Call (202) 357-4000.

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Japanese screen *Flowers and Birds of the Four Seasons* (detail) is at the Freer.

Musical Weekend

The 22d Smithsonian Musical Weekend will be held April 29-May 1. Highlights include a performance by the Dance Theatre of Harlem at the Kennedy Center; a concert by the Smithsonian Chamber Players; dinners at the Freer Gallery and the new National Postal Museum; tea and music at the Japanese Embassy; and breakfast at the Zoo. For details write Musical Weekend, Box 11302, Washington, D.C. 20008-0502.

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Special April exhibits, events

National Museum of African Art
Face of the Spirits: Masks from the Zaire Basin (April 20-September 25) Exhibition opens a window on the culture and artistry of the peoples of the Zaire Basin. See *Highlights continued*, page 32.
Asen: Iron Altars from Ouidah, Republic of Benin (through April 24) Show explores beliefs and symbols that spread from Africa to the New World and back.

Freer Gallery of Art
America Meets Asia Newly renovated, reinstalled galleries feature Asian and 19th- and early 20th-century American art.
Luxury Arts of the Silk Route Empires (runs indefinitely) Adjoining galleries showcase objects from the Freer and Sackler collections.

Arthur M. Sackler Gallery
A Mughal Hunt (through September 11) Exhibit unlocks the identity of the artist and subject of a 17th-century painting from India's Mughal dynasty.
Korean Arts of the Eighteenth Century: Splendor & Simplicity (through May 15) Paintings, ceramics, furniture, textiles, calligraphy, and royal and spiritual treasures are displayed in settings demonstrating their ceremonial and everyday use.

National Museum of Natural History
The Tongass: Alaska's Magnificent Rain Forest (April 22-July 10) SITES exhibit explores the remarkable beauty of this old-growth, temperate rain forest through a series of large-format photographs.
From Crystal Gardens (runs indefinitely) Exhibition showcases 20 of the most spectacular specimens in the museum's mineral collections.

National Zoological Park
Amazonia Permanent installation re-creates a microcosm of the world's largest rain forest and river habitat and explores its wonders.

National Air and Space Museum
Patty Wagstaff–National Aerobatic Champion (through March 31, 1995) Show features Wagstaff's *Extra 260* aircraft, recognizes her accomplishments as three-time U.S. National Aerobatic Champion.
Monitoring Amazonia from Space (through April 22) How modern satellite technology is being used to monitor changes in Amazonia's complex, diverse ecosystem.
A "Blueprint for Space" (through April) Artworks of space imagery commissioned in the 1950s by *Collier's* magazine.

National Museum of American History
Science in American Life (opens April 27) Permanent exhibit tracks advances and discoveries in science over the past 125 years–from aspirin to the atom. Highlights include re-creation of an 1876 chemical lab at Johns Hopkins University.
Rhythm & Roots: A Celebration of American Music & Dance (April 8 and 9; noon-4 P.M., and 8 P.M.) Eight music and dance ensembles representing diverse U.S. cultures and regions will perform as a prelude to appearances at the American Festival Japan '94 in Tokyo this July.

National Postal Museum
The Smithsonian's newest museum, located next to Union Station on Capitol Hill, presents exhibitions illustrating the history of the nation's mail service–from the Colonial Post and the Pony Express, to the beauty and lore of stamps.
The Madden Family Letters (through July 30) Exhibit traces five generations of an African-American family (1740-1992).

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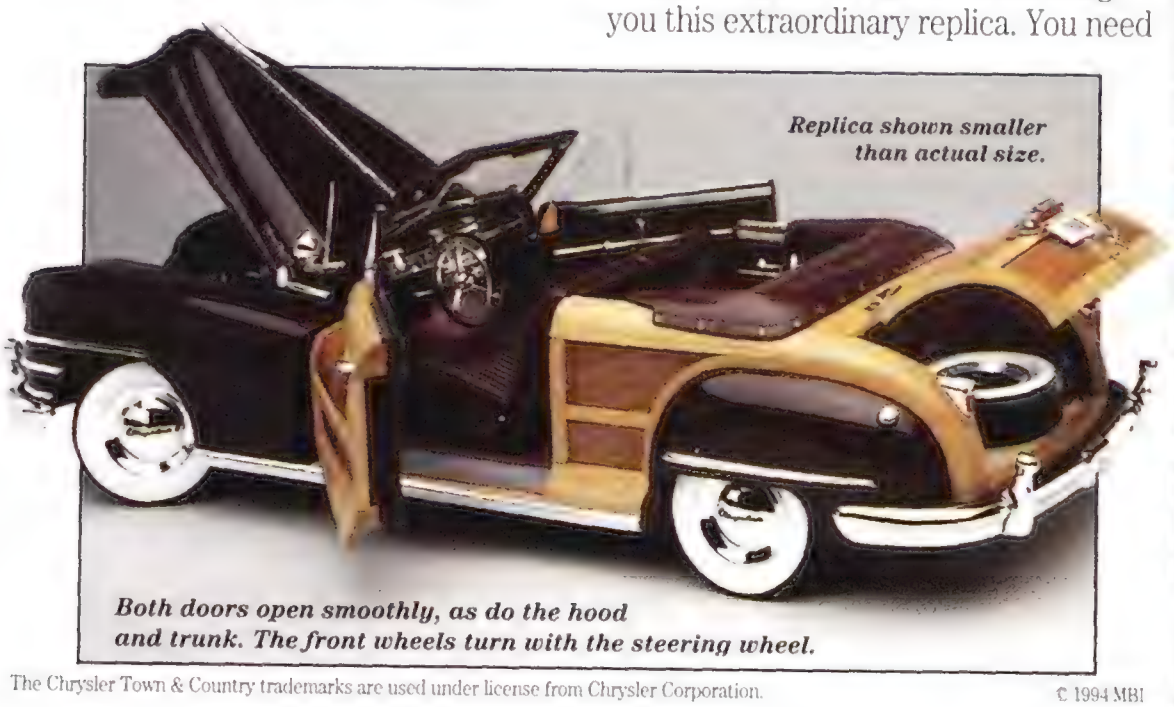

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Hirshhorn Museum & Sculpture Garden
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Directions–Sue Coe (through June 19) Large-scale narrative drawings explore issues such as violence against women, racism, capitalism and war.

Renwick Gallery
KPMG Peat Marwick Collection of American Crafts: A Gift to the Renwick Gallery (through April 17) Contemporary crafts by such artists as Peter Voulkos, Lenore Tawney and Rudolf Staffle.

National Museum of American Art
Capital View: A New Washington Panorama by Mark Klett (April 15-August 14) Show features photographer Mark Klett's 360-degree panorama of Washington, D.C.
North American Wildflowers: Watercolors by Mary Vaux Walcott (April 15-August 29) A selection of 50 watercolors by the American artist-naturalist.
Thomas Cole: Landscape into History (through August 7) A retrospective of the work of the father of the Hudson River school of painting.

National Portrait Gallery
Reporting the War: The Journalistic Coverage of World War II (April 22-September 5) Painting, photographs, recordings, manuscripts and memorabilia document the war experiences of 35 writers, photographers, radio commentators, field artists and censorship officials.
From Elizabeth I to Elizabeth II: Master Drawings from the National Portrait Gallery, London (through April 24) Portraits of important figures in British history.

Anacostia Museum
Malcolm X: Man, Ideal, Icon (April 3-June 5) An in-depth look at the life and philosophy of the African-American leader.
Takbir! Allahu Akbar: Photographs of African-American Muslims in Washington, D.C. (April 3-May 8) Images by Fareed H. Nu'man detail the participation of many African-Americans in Islam.

Arts and Industries Building Discovery Theater
Pecos Bill (April 5-30; Tuesday-Friday 10 and 11:30 A.M.; Saturday, 11:30 A.M. and 1 P.M.) Live theater for young audiences follows the escapades of Pecos Bill (grades K-4). Call (202) 357-1500.

Cooper-Hewitt Museum (New York)
Courts and Collectors: Treasures in Warsaw, Dresden, Copenhagen and New York (April 30-May 1) Special symposium held to benefit the museum, cosponsored by the National Antique & Art Dealers Association. For information, tickets, call: Joanne Creveling, Inc. (212) 755-8502.
Packaging the New: Design and the American Consumer, 1925-1975 (through August 14) Role of the designer during America's golden age of industrial design.

Mixed-media sculpture *Lost Woods* was created of painted wood, reed and found objects by Bryant Holsenbeck, one of the artists at Smithsonian Craft Show.

Exhibition catalogs

Catalogs available currently include:
Face of the Spirits: Masks from the Zaire Basin ($39.95 paper)
Reporting the War: the Journalistic Coverage of World War II ($39.95/$24.95 paper)
To order, send check or money order to Smithsonian Museum Shops, 8308 Cinder Bed Road, Newington, Virginia 22122. Include 15 percent of purchase to cover postage, handling (minimum, $1.75).

Smithsonian on the air

Dialogue Weekly half-hour public radio series on national and international affairs features talks with renowned scholars, authors and political figures. Produced by the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars and Radio Smithsonian. Check local listings.

Smithsonian National Associates

The Smithsonian Associates, U.S. and International Events will bring programs to San Jose and Santa Ana/Irvine, California, and Knoxville, Tennessee, this month. Events in San Jose (April 7-10) will include a lecture on Chinese festivals. The Santa Ana/Irvine program (April 14 -17) will feature traditional Mexican dances. The Knoxville series (April 6 -10) will include lectures on modern sculpture, endangered species.

Associates in these areas will receive invitational brochures; Contributing Members will receive complimentary tickets to a selected lecture. Contact: U.S. and International Events, 490 L'Enfant Plaza, S.W., Suite 4210, Washington, D.C. 20560; (202) 287-3210.

Resident Associate Program

To become a Resident Associate, or for fee and ticket information, call (202) 357-3030. April events include:
Herbert Block: A Cartoonist's Life (April 11; 7 P.M.) Lecture by the renowned *Washington Post* political cartoonist.
James Earl Jones: Voices and Silences (April 13; 7:30 P.M.) The distinguished actor talks about his life.

Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service

SITES organizes and circulates exhibitions to cities throughout the United States and abroad. To sponsor a show in your community, write SITES, Smithsonian, Washington, D.C. 20560. Here is an April exhibit:
• Flint, Michigan (April 2-May 15) *To Color America: Portraits by Winold Reiss*, Mott Community College Library.

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Highlights continued

The timeless face of the spirits

The rich and diverse cultures of 40 ethnic groups living in the Zaire River Basin, now essentially the Republic of Zaire and northern Angola, are embodied in an exhibit opening this month at the National Museum of African Art. "Face of the Spirits: Masks from the Zaire Basin," on view April 20 through September 25, was organized by the Ethnographic Museum of Antwerp. It brings to life the complex masking traditions of Zaire–practices rooted in the supernatural, in the belief that spirits, incarnated in the form of masks, appear and intervene during peoples' lives.

Over the centuries the peoples of the Zaire Basin have attempted to control these unpredictable, elusive spirits through special rituals, contacting them via religious and magical means. Called on to appear at ceremonies marking rites of passage, and invoked in times of disease, drought, dispute or threat to established structure, these supernatural beings take on a physical presence through the medium of masks.

A mask not only disguises its wearer, but also molds that individual's behavior. The masker, at times possessed by the spirit, assumes its supernatural powers. "In the mask," says Frank Herreman, the show's originator, "the artist expresses his community's values and belief in the supernatural world, and bestows upon the spirits a face that is timeless."
Diane M. Bolz

Mask of Lele origin reveals Bushoong influence in headdress, metal appliqué.

Four-eyed mask, probably Bembe, depicts spiritual leader noted for "double sight."

Although worn in ceremonies by a man, Pende *mbuya* mask portrays female figure.

Chokwe mask incarnates *cihongo*, the male spirit symbolic of power and riches.

Mask worn in Bali initiation ceremony bears tiny hands as "stamps of the spirit."

Royal mask represents Mweel, the wife of Woot, ancestral father of the Kuba.

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By Fred Hapgood

'Up in the sky there's a good time to be had everywhere, always, for free'

Besides that, behind every majestic cloud there's a little bit of basic physics going on, and looking up, you can almost see it

As best Jack Borden can recall, he was standing on a hill just outside Boston when he decided for some reason, or even for no reason, just out of whim, to glance at the sky. Like anyone else, he had done the same thousands of times before, perhaps to look at a bird or at a plane or to check the weather. There was nothing rare or unusual about the sky or his mood or surroundings that day; nonetheless, when he raised his eyes, he felt as if something had lifted him up. "I am never at any time oblivious to the fact that I was once oblivious to the sky," he says now, his voice tense, driving, a bit harsh. "That is forever in my mind. The before and afterness of my awareness of the canopy above."

For several months Borden, who was a television news reporter, tried to integrate this epiphany with his career by suggesting sky angles during story conferences. But television has to follow the culture, not lead, and so, incredibly, Borden quit: he walked away from his lucrative profession and started a career as press agent to the clouds, or, as he puts it himself, the "Johnny Appleseed of the Sky." He compiled an activity guide for classrooms, published a chart of cloud types, scripted spots for radio, wrote a stream of articles that connected sky awareness with science, math, religion, music, environmental studies, art, literature and dance; and preached to anyone who would listen. Sixteen years later he is still at it. Now as CEO, president or "head cloud" of For Spacious Skies, he is still laying it out to environmental groups, planetarium directors, home-schoolers, pilot societies, mental health professionals, arts councils, prisons and huge numbers of schools, to list just a few obligations from his jam-packed dayscheduler. "You. Gotta. Hammer. Away. All. The. Time!" he says, with growing intensity.

The day we met, the sky was deep and bright. A tangle of gauzy puffs and spun wisps were driving out into the Atlantic high overhead. They looked a bit like a collection of white eyebrows and eyelashes: curly and straight, silky and cobbled. At first glance these markings were static, but after a minute of quiet observation the sky started swinging like a giant mobile. Curves kinked and twisted: forms stretched and unrolled. After we had watched for a while, I asked Borden to summarize his gospel. He held out his arms, looked up in his Corning Serengetis (the best sunglasses, in his judgment, for looking at clouds) and said, "There's a good time to be had by all, everywhere, always, for free."

The priests of Israel taught that the sight of cloud substance, lying as it did halfway between the material and spiritual realms, was as close as mortals could come to God's presence. The great American landscape painters of the past century, Frederic Church, Thomas Cole and Alfred Bierstadt, believed that the creative spirit of nature was to be found in its purest form in the skies.

Today, as Borden testifies fervently, frequently and fluently, the status of clouds has fallen. Americans travel great distances in search of exotic, untouched landscapes, when the biggest, least modified and most varied is right overhead. Communities spend huge sums for fireworks displays when they could celebrate every day with a display more brilliant and imaginative than any they could buy. "Most of the inquiries I get are from schoolteachers looking for materials to help them with their weather lessons," Borden says, wincing, slumping, looking downward, the very picture of rejection.

Borden has not settled on any one theory of how we came to this pass. Perhaps secularism stripped the sky of its spirituality, or perhaps we just lost touch when the

Some say his head is in the clouds, but Jack Borden runs a nonprofit organization dedicated to sky gazing.

bulk of the culture moved away from land and ocean into built structures. It cannot help either that the environment in which clouds act and to which they react is so transparent. Watching a cloud is like watching an animal in an invisible habitat. We see the creature appear, advance, pause, twist and whirl, but we never see why.

Suppose it were possible to give the contemporary mind a little help, perhaps with a pair of magic eyeglasses that would allow us to visualize the thermal structure of the sky directly. Suppose one morning, when the sun is just beginning to warm the ground after a cool night, we throw open the door, step out onto the lawn and put on our magic glasses. Perhaps the first novelty to catch our attention would be the thermals themselves. Multiple streams of shimmering bubbles rising everywhere around us, floating upward in strings or chains, like the strings of bubbles that rise from the bottom of a pot of water just before it starts to boil. We might see these thermals rising from dark green bushes, asphalt roads, mailboxes, car roofs and rooftops.

Thermals: invisible but not insensible

Each string begins at a patch of surface that is warmer than its immediate neighbor. As these warmer patches heat the air directly over them, the warmer air expands, grows less dense and lifts. As it rises, cooler air is pulled in from the immediate environs. The effect works like a switch, turning the stream on and off and creating a series of hot air bubbles instead of a continuous flow of warm air. Thermals may be invisible but they are not insensible; they can make flying in a lightplane feel like a speed run over an unpaved country road.

Some patches will be warmer than their neighbors because they absorb sunlight better, but our stroll will probably leave us more impressed with the importance of height. The higher you go, the cooler the air gets (for the first few miles). When something solid pokes up into the air, like a building or a tree, its solar-radiated top is almost as warm as if it were at ground level, but the air around it is cooler. This temperature difference makes the thermal rising from the object relatively lighter and gives it more buoyancy, more vigor. If the air is cool and the surface warm, even the smallest of sun-warmed stones will shed tiny thermals. Rocks and bushes might breathe out streams of bubbles with dimensions measured in inches; cars and trees, in feet; and skyscrapers and mountains, majestic exhalations the size of blimps or even larger.

As these thermals rise vertically they interact with a second set of features visible only through our magic glasses: horizontal layers of air stacked up like rugs or blankets in a salesroom. These layers (also defined by temperature differences) are constantly moving: flowing under and around one another, heaving some layers

Small wonder that the great landscape painters of the past century found inspiration in the skies:

up and others down, and beating on their neighbors with waves like those we see brushing over wheatfields or rippling through flags. They form rivers, pools, channels, valleys and hills, around which other layers ebb and flow, from horizon to horizon, all up and down the height of the sky.

This is cloud country, the niche to which clouds are adapted and on which they leave their mark. They certainly thrive here: at any given moment half the globe's surface, 100 million square miles, is covered with them– sheetlike, rounded, quilted, filamentous, lacy, puffy, in

Fred Hapgood is certain that cloud tourism is the next trend, and he is open to proposals from venture capitalists wishing to explore the idea.

here, fair weather cumuli, looking like gauzy puffs of cotton, cavort with spun wisps in a glorious blue sky. Feathered cirrus streamers, sometimes called mares' tails, are really ice crystals blown by high winds.

all degrees of luminescence and opacity, blossoming, spreading, sailing and fading all around the world.

Not one cubic centimeter of the atmosphere is motionless; half is always rising, and half always sinking. When a volume of air lifts it expands, and that expansion cools it. If it rises high enough, expands enough and cools enough, sooner or later whatever water vapor it might have contained will condense into droplets or crystals and begin to appear as cloud-stuff. Clouds are a sign that work is being done, a mark of the atmosphere exerting itself to lift millions of tons of air against gravity. The lifting impulses might come from air currents flowing up a slope of land or air, like an ocean wave sliding up a beach or snow curling up over the face of a road plow, or from horizontal layers being boosted straight up by other layers swelling or rising under them, or from thermals. Air rivers rotate in eddies like shafts or screws as they flow through the atmosphere, and sometimes clouds appear on their rising sides. Sometimes a layer of air that is pushed up and over the top of a mountain falls, contracts and warms, pushing the cooler air below down like a spring. Eventually this compressed air pushes back, throwing the warmer parcel up again. Each arc marks its zenith with a little cloud cut into an almond shape, like a scuff on the ceiling. If we ever do get real magic glasses this last drama might prove another tourist attraction for mountain resorts.

Clouds start when a volume of rising air cools down past dewpoint. (Dewpoint is the temperature at which water vapor begins to condense or, say, the point at

which the bathroom mirror begins to fog up during your morning shower.) Clouds top out when that air hits a layer that is either warmer than or as warm as itself. (A mass entering a cooler layer will lift right on through.) If the layer is warmer it will act like a cap, forcing the cooler, heavier mass to spread out under it into a sheet. A string of thermal bubbles hitting one of these would behave like dollops of whipped cream hitting a ceiling. A mass entering a layer with the same temperature as itself will stop rising, float in place and puff out, as if something were blowing it up from within.

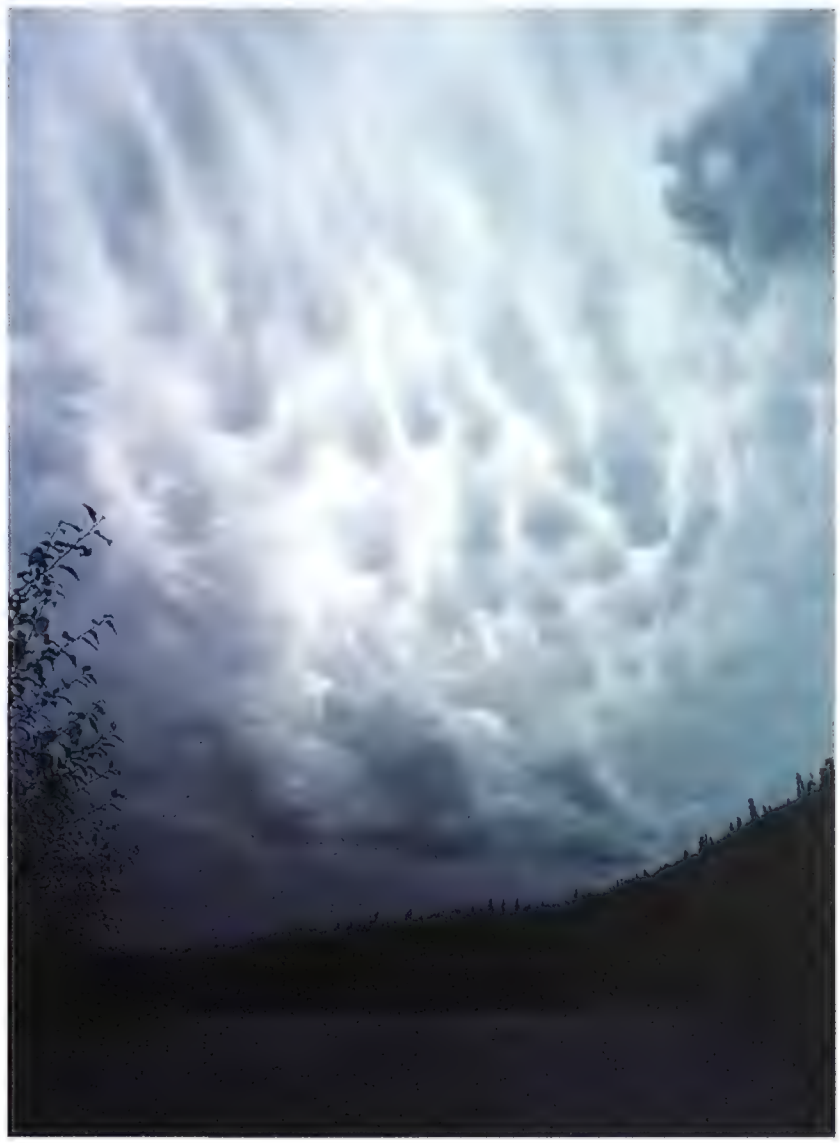
Clouds were once considered "essences"

Our magic glasses are of course a metaphor for the accumulated wisdom of modern meteorology, cloud physics and atmospheric physics. These sciences and their discoveries are quite recent. Until the beginning of the 19th century, clouds didn't even have any names; they were just "essences" of the atmosphere. In the winter of 1803 a London pharmacist named Luke Howard suggested a descriptive system based on four cloud types: flat or "layered" (stratus), puffed or "heaped" (cumulus), wispy or "curled" (cirrus) and precipitating (nimbus). The great virtue of his terms was that they could be plugged into one another to describe more complex cases: "cumulonimbus" described a precipitating puffy; "cirrostratus," a wispy veil covering the sky; "stratocumulus," a layer of rounded or rolled cloud masses, and so on. Howard's system won immediate acceptance.

Luke Howard's philosophy was that clouds had physical histories and contexts that could be traced, discovered and understood. For example (in contemporary terms), the wispiness of cirrus clouds is connected to the high altitudes at which they form. The less water vapor an air mass carries, the cooler it has to be before that vapor will start to condense. A cloud appearing at a high altitude implies an air mass that had to rise, expand and cool quite a lot before passing dewpoint, and therefore contained very little water vapor to begin with. Thus one reason why high-altitude clouds are so loosely woven is that they don't have as much aqueous material to work with as do thick, plump, opaque, low-altitude cumulus or stratus clouds. Also, water vapor in high-altitude clouds tends to condense as ice crystals rather than droplets. Crystals resist reevaporation better than droplets, so when they fall out of their cloud they fall quite far, leaving long, twisting trails. Sometimes these plumes of crystals fall through air currents flowing in different directions, which from the ground gives them a curved or kinked line, like handwriting.

All clouds release liquid (as soon as a droplet forms it usually starts to fall), but nimbus clouds are those whose rain or snow travels all the way to the ground. This is a rare achievement, since every cloud base is separated

When condensation occurs inside a towering cumulonimbus, tremendous energy is released.



This menace, sometimes 39,000 feet tall, can conjure up violent tornadoes, lightning and huge hailstones.

With warm air rising inside the cloud, and cool air sinking outside, cumuli seem to organize in flocks.

Resembling a cow's udder, and so named mammatus, these usually form on underside of a cumulonimbus.

from the ground by a gauntlet of warm air (warmer than dewpoint, anyway) that reevaporates most drops falling from non-nimbus clouds. In order for a drop to reach the ground it usually has to gang up inside the cloud with lots of other droplets to make a drop so large and fat that a kernel of it will survive the long fall to earth. The taller the cloud, the more room there is for droplets to drift into one another, coalesce and accumulate the reserves required. A cumulonimbus, or thunderhead, might tower for six miles or even higher. Thus in terms of actual field usage, a nimbus cloud can be thought of as one that is tall.

The cloud kingdom grows ever more complex

Howard's system is still the foundation of cloud systematics, though the kingdom has grown more complex over the past two centuries. The World Meteorological Organization recognizes 10 genera, 26 species and 30-odd varieties of cloud names. Then there are the intermediate and transitional forms, the "supplementary features" (such as udderlike hanging protuberances), the "motherclouds" (those that form as extensions of one cloud but become yet another type) and the "special clouds" (containing little bits of dust and other pollutants).

When scientists trace back the cascade of interactions and exchanges they find that clouds are connected to more than just their local circumstances: it is possible they help to govern the energy budget of the planet. The speculation is that as Earth heats up and more water is lifted into the atmosphere, a higher proportion of the planet's cloud cover is changed from thin, wispy cirrus clouds into thick, opaque, low-altitude clouds. These reflect more sunlight back into space, thus cooling the planet. While this idea is still unproved, it is historically the case that over billions of years the average temperature of Earth has fluctuated within a fairly narrow range, relative to much more dramatic changes in the output of the sun. It certainly looks as though there is a thermostat in the system somewhere.

In another time, in an age dominated by the sail and plow, clouds drove human events. Out of this, perhaps, evolved bits of folklore attesting to the power of clouds to meddle in human affairs. (For example, "Mackerel skies and mares' tails make tall ships carry low sails" is a phrase born of conventional wisdom since altocumulus clouds and cirrus clouds indicate wind.) Today this role is almost reversed–we are meddling with the clouds. In the 1980s analysts looking at photographs of ocean clouds taken from orbit saw straight lines of light appearing across them, as though someone were drawing on them with a giant laser. Investigation proved these lines were being made from underneath, by ships. The sulfur in their diesel exhausts was rising into the clouds and introducing chemical reactions that eventually

caused the cloud droplets to be smaller and brighter. (The smaller the drops, the more light is back-scattered from them.) This raises the question of whether atmospheric pollution might not be brightening the tops of clouds all around the world, reflecting more light and thus contributing to a global cooling effect. Other calculations have suggested that when polluted clouds evaporate they leave behind a "waste" of sulfate particles that stays in the atmosphere for up to a week. These particles would also have a back-scattering, cooling effect under some circumstances. If global warming exists, these effects might balance it out.

So perhaps, bit by bit, civilization is finding its way into a new relationship with the sky. In the old days we looked up and "saw" the Divine; one can imagine a future in which we will "see" the infrastructure of the planet, a great engineering wonder, a huge solar-powered, supremely efficient machine regulating the support systems of Earth. One could even conceive of tours, of theme parks floating in the sky, illuminating this elegant and sophisticated technology, which will be held out as an inspiration for terrestrial engineers.

Once you look up, something takes hold

Should that day come, cloud man Jack Borden will probably be the tour guide. Long after I met Jack I kept stopping, looking up and releasing myself into the clouds scudding overhead. Once you take the time to look at the sky, something does seem to take hold. In time, though, I wanted more, and one windy day I signed on as a sky tourist in a lightplane.

That morning the sky was full of cumuli flying along. I pointed to the clouds I wanted to visit, and the pilot nosed the plane up. We kept underestimating their altitude, which meant we were also underestimating their size. By the time the plane arrived at the right altitude, 6,000 feet, the clouds seemed enormous, a hundred feet high by thousands of feet wide and long. They were moving at a brisk 35 knots, but an even brisker wind was blowing over their tops in the same direction, pushing them forward, like the bow of a fast motorboat. As we pulled closer we could see, as the sun shone down through the clouds, faint parallel bars of gold and black slanting down from the bottom of each cloud into a shallow beard of rain falling underneath. Complex surfaces of mist tendrils branched out into the air, like milky nerves growing through transparent tissues.

One of the great questions in the early history of cloud science was how clouds managed to stay up, given the obvious weight of water. Some speculated that the drops in clouds were bubbles with fires inside, like hot-air balloons. (The astronomer Halley, discoverer of the comet, even thought some antigravity principle might be at work.) Eventually physicists figured out that as soon as water vapor condenses into a droplet, that droplet starts to fall out of the cloud. A cloud that does not replace the water carried away by condensing drops with new supplies of water vapor will rain itself out and vanish in minutes. Still, the theory that clouds stay up because they contain bits of fire is not completely wrong. Whenever a water molecule flies into a droplet, attractive forces accelerate it sharply in the instant before it hits, like a meteor that's been pulled down onto Earth's surface by gravity. Growing droplets, like those in clouds, grow because they are receiving many such impacts. Each blow lifts the temperature of the droplet, which then heats the surrounding air like a tiny radiator.

We found an open space, resembling a harbor, and flew about, trying to keep track of the landscape. A hanging valley dropped and then folded up; a dome blew up on the horizon and toppled. No single feature survived for long. The clouds were mounding and kneading themselves, smoothly and evenly. These changes were driven not by wind–the clouds were moving at air speed and thus felt no wind–but by a flood of energy being released by condensation "radiators" running inside.

If you looked to the west you could see these formations appearing in the sky about 50 miles off, fed by huge thermals rising from a chain of hills. The thermals rose, clouds formed and the condensation radiators started to run. The radiators heated the air inside the cloud, and that air lifted in reaction, sucking up more air from underneath and outside. When the prevailing winds blew the clouds east, away from the hills, this updraft gave the cloud independence, self-sufficiency, by allowing it to graze on the reservoirs of water vapor floating above the eastern half of the state. The condensation radiators had turned the cloud into an "aquavore."

Toward the end of my tour the pilot lifted up and circled over the tops of these brilliant air lilies. The upwelling in the interiors of clouds is balanced by downdrafts falling around their outside edges, and this current regulates the distance between cumulus clouds, like a kind of social spacing. Clouds not only organize and sustain an internal metabolism, by sucking up vapor, they also organize themselves socially, into flocks. These self-organizing societies had been crossing over continents long before the dinosaurs, long before biological life evolved. For billions of years around the globe they had been sailing out into the world, grazing on the atmospheric vapor, running before the wind, looking for adventure. As for us at this moment, our primitive technology was starting to run out of gas, and we had to land.

As a warm front rolls in, a high layer of stratus (altostratus) covers the sky, a sign that steady precipitation looms.

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By Bruce Watson

We couldn't run, so we hoped we could hide

In July of 1961, the President warned us all to start digging bomb shelters, and a craze set in. Today, its results are becoming museum pieces

After Vienna meeting, Kennedy feared the bellicose Khrushchev might think him a man with "no guts."

All summer, Armageddon had been slow business. The world was ticklish at the usual edges–Berlin encircled, Cuba tense, Southeast Asia a growing thorn. The calendar said July 1961, but Americans were sheltered by optimism left over from the '50s. The President spoke of new frontiers from the Peace Corps to the moon, and there was more talk about the threat to Babe Ruth's 34-year-old home run record than the threat of nuclear war. Then, on July 26, the phone began ringing in a Dallas office.

"Hello, Acme Bomb and Fallout Shelter Company. How can we help you?"

Speaking on national TV the night before, President John F. Kennedy had unearthed fears buried deeply for a decade. With a noose tightening around Berlin, Kennedy said, it was time to think the unthinkable. "In the event of an attack, the lives of those families which are not hit in a nuclear blast and fire can still be saved if they can be warned to take shelter and if that shelter is available," the President said. "We owe that kind of insurance to our families and to our country. . . . The time to start is now."

For a dozen years, backyard bomb shelters had been the local oddball's room addition and a barometer of neighborhood paranoia. Now, in a suddenly sobered nation, the survival program promised shelter salesmen a quick killing. Within days of Kennedy's speech, business boomed at the Peace-O-Mind Shelter Company in Stephenville, Texas. Out West, Sacramento's Atlas Bomb Shelter Company hustled to meet demand for its prefab model. In Los Angeles, as schoolchildren practiced "duck and cover" drills, a newspaper ad warning "Everyone is a Target!" sold 236 Fox Hole Shelters in a month. Franchises were available. Chicago's Wonder Building Company opened a second shelter factory, while the Lancer Survival Corporation on Long Island received 3,000 calls and sold 200 shelters in two weeks.

This month, when the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History unveils a family fallout shelter (p. 52) in its "Science in American Life" exhibit, a few visitors may smirk at the relic. From the queasy safety of the post-Cold War era, nothing seems more darkly comic than Dad out in the yard digging for his family's survival under the shadow of a mushroom cloud. But in the Cold War's coldest years, 1950 to 1962, fears ran deeper than any man-made molehole. Some 200,000 families, wanting only to outlast Armageddon, planted such hollow seeds of hope. Futile as they seemed against a missile's megatons, these suburban family holes, stocked with food, water and often a shotgun, plumbed the depths of humanity's will to survive.

The search for a shelter of one's own did not begin with the early angst of the Atomic Age. Once World War II's ticker tape was swept away, there was immediate cause for concern. It didn't take a rocket scientist to re-

An Illinois civil defense director used his wife and kids to show that fallout shelters meant family safety.

Father and son could enjoy hobbies in a shelter–and rifles might be needed to keep out the neighbors.

Some families tried to make shelters a cheery part of their American dream houses; others dug in secret.

alize that Hiroshima's destruction could someday be visited on Boston, Los Angeles or a hundred other ground zeroes. Some hid their fears beneath dreams of world government or international control of nuclear weapons, but so long as America held all the nuclear cards, the most common shelter was a wall of avoidance. "Having been warned of the horrible nature of atomic warfare," Albert Einstein said in 1948, "[the public] has done nothing about it, and to a large extent has dismissed the warning from its consciousness." The following year the Soviet Union changed the nuclear monopoly into a nuclear club.

By the winter of 1950, with the Korean War grimly drumming in the distance, American skies seemed naked to the enemy. Civil defense officials talked confidently about group shelters for 50 million, but in spanking new suburban backyards the nutty and the merely nervous were taking survival into their own hands. Shelters costing from $13.50 for a covered cave up to $5,500 for an underground suite with phone and toilet became the latest fad, especially in Southern California. Skeptics asked whether the sheltered would emerge into a livable world or into a jungle, but true believers perished the thought. "Things are probably going to look different when you get outside," said the widely read pamphlet *How to Survive an Atomic Bomb.* "If the bomb hit within a mile and a half of where you are, things are going to look very different."

Even while preparing for Doomsday, some people tried to look on the bright side. "It will make a wonderful place for the children to play in," one housewife said of the family shelter. But most people just wanted to stop worrying about "the bomb."

"When an Atomic Blast Hits Your Home or Auto"

Throughout the '50s, in fact, "the bomb" was an unwanted guest at the postwar American dream party. While the economy boomed and the public sunbathed in self-assurance, rumbling headlines about atomic weapons pitted prosperity against panic in a Cold War of the American mind. Above all, urged the mood of the moment, remain calm. "If there's an explosion, we'll wait about a minute," an unruffled dad reassured his sheltered family in a civil defense film. "After it's all over, then we'll go upstairs and take a look around, see if it's all right to clean up." Magazine articles like "When an Atomic Blast Hits Your Home or Auto" tried to be sanguine about atomic annihilation. First the good news: "Chance for survival in the event of an atomic attack is much better than is generally thought." Then the bad: even a small bomb would level houses a mile away. But finally, a prideful chaser of hope: "Families living close to target areas may have a good chance of survival merely by living in an American-type house or driving

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THE PART THAT'S LANIER ALWAYS WORKING.

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In '59, when a Miami couple spent two-week honeymoon in a shelter, civil defense was still a joking matter.

Despite early pitches like this one in 1951 for "atomic igloo," by 1960 only 1,500 shelters had been built.

an American car and taking very simple precautions."

Among the simplest precautions were walled-off basement corners stocked with two weeks' rations and a radio tuned to Conelrad, the new emergency network. A shoddy homemade shelter, the government warned, could "broil its occupants to a crisp or squeeze them like grapefruit," but nothing could stop the do-it-yourselfer armed with *Popular Mechanics*' own shelter blueprint. While Congress spun its wheels debating evacuation versus massive community shelters, contractors improvised protection from bombs more powerful than anybody could fathom. Septic tanks, concrete tubes and steel sheds were fitted with stairs and ventilator shafts, then buried with the solemn prayer they would never need to be used.

No matter how real the fears, neighbors and the nation at large ridiculed more often than they saluted these early "atomic caves" and "family foxholes." "For those who can afford neuroses, this is it," said one builder. Pitched alongside lead-lined pajamas and an "Atomic Shock Cure" of salt, soda and water, shelters smacked of survivalist snake oil. Most people, when they thought about World War III, trusted our planes to stop their planes. If a few got through, you'd be safe beyond blast and fire. If you lived too close, well. . . Then in 1954 the wind shifted.

During an H-bomb test in the Pacific, a Japanese fishing boat strayed into a new kind of weather–fallout. Studies soon showed that a single bomb could rain lethal radioactivity 150 miles downwind. Dozens of bombs could blanket the country. Once the danger sank into popular culture, jeremiads were there for the taking. Smug Harvard satirist Tom Lehrer sang "We Will All Go Together When We Go," while Nevil Shute's best-selling novel *On the Beach* dealt with terminal cynicism and suicide among the last few survivors of global radioactive poisoning. Amid rising incertitude, even *Good Housekeeping* politely suggested that its readers set aside their recipes and start digging.

By the late 1950s, if the apocalypse wasn't now, it seemed only a matter of time. Sweden had multistory underground caves stocked for 20,000 people. Couldn't Uncle Sam do the same? A Congressional committee's $32 billion shelter program was deemed too costly. "I don't think I would put that much money into holes in the ground to crawl into," Air Force general Curtis LeMay said. "I would rather spend more of it on offensive weapons systems to deter the war." Still, the Eisenhower Administration trotted prototype family shelters around the country and churned out books on building them. There were few takers. In a nation of lawns and home improvement, only kooks and characters bur-

Bruce Watson has written on a range of subjects, from Navajo Code Talkers to Luddites. In third grade during the Berlin Crisis, he too "ducked and covered."

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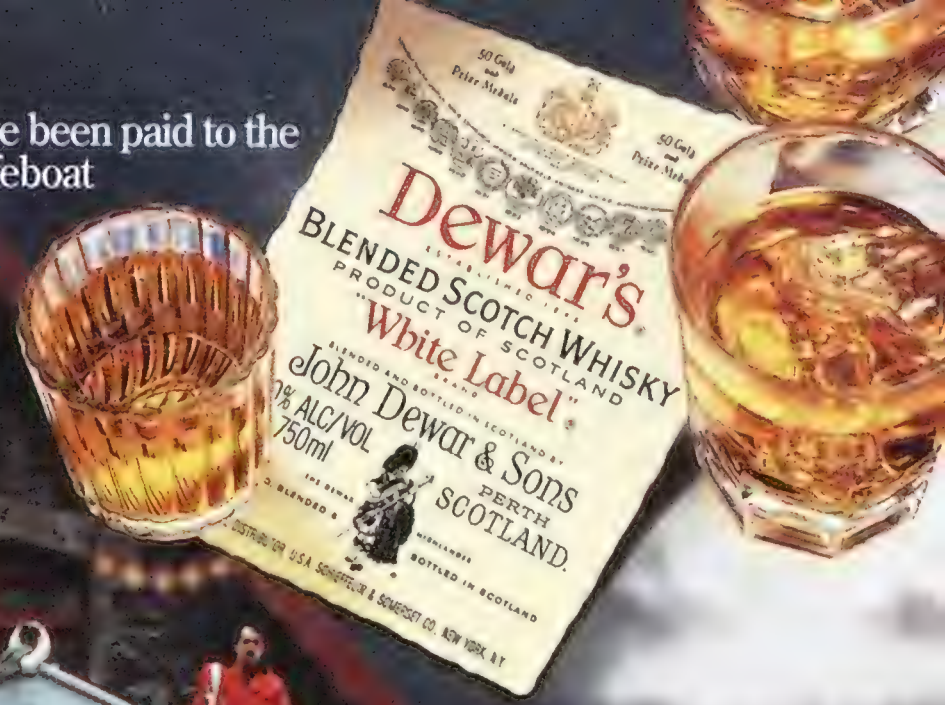


DEWAR'S SCOTLAND

Dewar's "White Label" ® 1984 Schenley Import Co., N.Y., N.Y. (80 Proof)

How one old shelter got a face-lift–and a permanent home

By William L. Bird jr.

Tim Howey had a curious problem: what to do with the fallout shelter buried in the front yard of his family's suburban home in Fort Wayne, Indiana. The "all-steel" shelter for four, shaped like an RFD mailbox with a conning tower stuck on top, lay 15 feet underground, put there heaven knows when by former owners. But when the evergreens planted to camouflage its telltale ventilation pipes and silo-like hatch began to die, casual passers-by started asking, "What is that?" Inevitably followed by, "Can we see it?"

"The only thing to do," Howey recalls, "was to cover it up or get rid of it." Irked by these attentions and convinced by the much-heralded "end of the Cold War" that he was sitting on a piece of history, Howey wrote to the Smithsonian. He also began asking around about the shelter's past.

John Haverstock, a retired Fort Wayne realtor who'd relocated to Salt Lake City, was sure he had sold it to the previous owners, Mr. and Mrs. Murland Anderson, in 1955. Neighbor Mrs. Tony Chong remembered watching the shelter's installation as a young girl: "Children came from blocks away to see the hole dug and the big crane drop it into the ground. Although we were accustomed to the sight of bulldozers and earth diggers in the developing suburbs," Chong recalled, "a crane was quite another story." The spectacular event was in 1955, she was sure–the same year her father's bowling alley installed automatic pin-setting machines. But other neighbors swore the date was 1961.

In fact, both groups were right. The Andersons did install the shelter in 1955. But after a few years it began thrusting itself up through the surface of the yard, where it stayed until the Berlin Crisis of '61. In that year's frenzy of shelter building, workers dug deeper, lengthened the access hatch and buried it again. Haverstock, meanwhile, had got out of the shelter business. He had dabbled in it briefly after seeing an article in *Life* called "H-bomb Hideaway." Buying up six shelters at $1,100 apiece, he offered them for $1,800, installation included. Each came with four bunks, shelves for supplies and a chemical toilet. A hand-cranked ventilation system circulated and filtered the air.

Haverstock's display–with shelters painted in red, white and blue–drew "hundreds of onlookers." But he sold only two, one to a doctor from Ohio, the other to the Andersons. The big problem, he says, was that banks wouldn't offer loans. "They figured if there was going to be a bomb attack, financing anything that depended on the threat of attack would be foolish."

Planning to donate the shelter to the Smithsonian, Howey and his mother discovered that the rock bottom price for digging the thing up, filling in the hole and flatbedding 2,000 pounds of steel to Washington, D.C. was $4,444. Fortunately, a company called Martin Enterprises joined them in their gift, dug it up and hauled it to Washington for nothing. And so, after a thorough cleaning and refurbishing with 1950s board games, canned goods, sleeping bags and water purification tablets, it found its present home in the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History.

rowed like moles in their own backyards. Hear about that Texas family? Three days underground! Just sweated it out in some tank where it got to 80 degrees with drenching humidity. This was only a test. Government paid them $100 a day! And that Miami couple? Spent their honeymoon in a shelter. Two weeks! Played a lot of rummy, they said. Right.

Warnings continued to hammer on the shell of hope as relentlessly as Nikita Khrushchev banging his shoe at the United Nations. And the specter of Soviet missiles able to strike anywhere with only 30 minutes' warning made evacuation seem ridiculous. By 1960, only 1,500 shelters sat stocked and ready, but a poll showed that 40 percent of Americans were debating whether to dig. Panic's long fuse wound its way back to Hiroshima, needing only a crisis to light it.

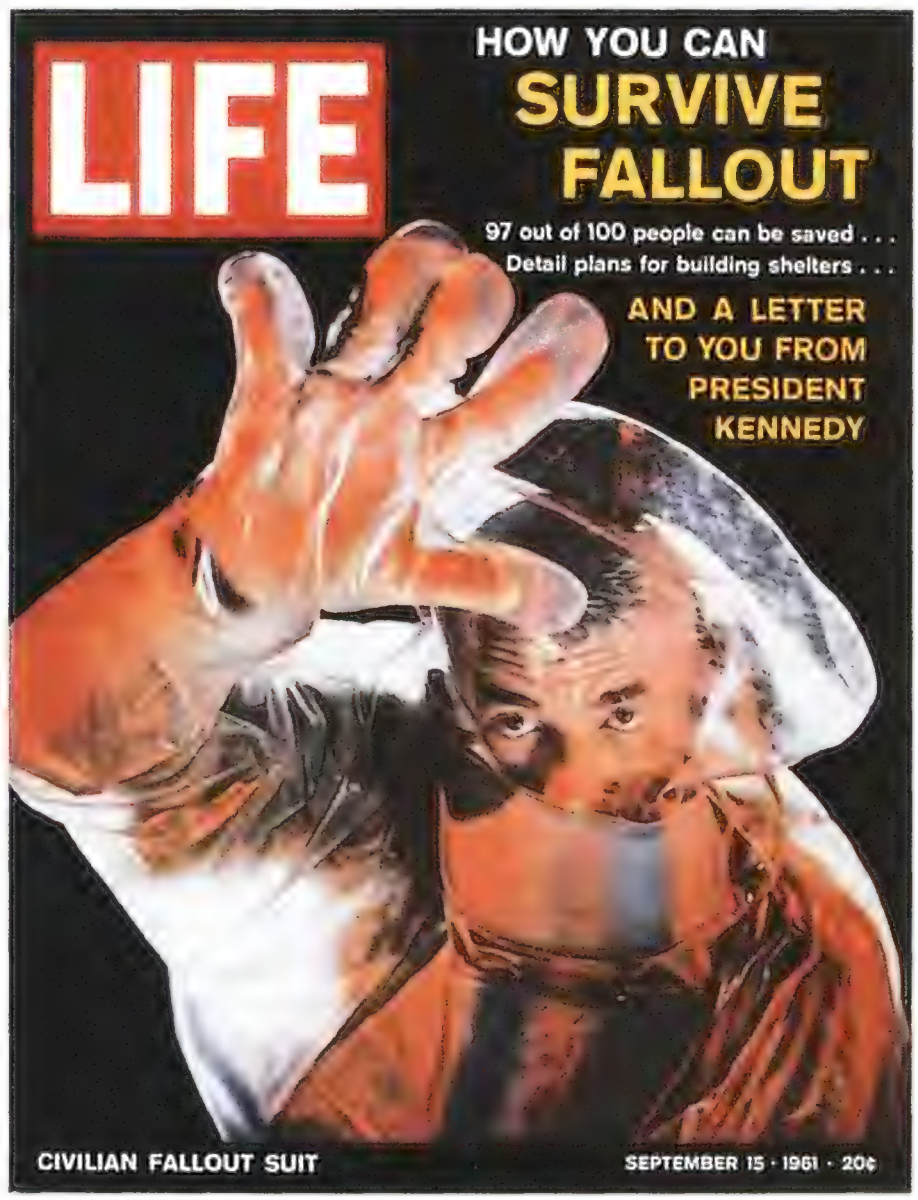
The President said to start digging

The match was the seam between East and West running down the middle of Berlin. During the tense Vienna summit of June 1961, Khrushchev set a deadline. Tired of watching East Germans make Communism look bad as they streamed into the prosperous West, he wanted a new treaty ousting NATO troops from Berlin and recognizing East Germany. Within six months. Throughout July, threats flew while military budgets swelled on both sides. On a warm July night, the President interrupted regularly scheduled programs like *Dobie Gillis* and *Father Knows Best* with the bleakest news Americans had ever heard on TV. Overnight those lazy, hazy days of summer turned crazy.

Calling Berlin "the great testing place of Western courage and will," Kennedy promised within months to "let every citizen know what steps he can take without delay to protect his family in case of attack." But neither citizens nor Soviets could wait. In mid-August the Berlin Wall divided the city, and on September 1 a huge fireball rose over central Russia. Ending a three-year bilateral moratorium on nuclear testing, Khrushchev began blustering about forthcoming 50- to 100-megaton warheads, large enough, experts said, to ignite Vermont.

Even families who knew nothing of the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*' Doomsday Clock, ticking off humanity's final hour, felt midnight's approach and began scrambling for shelter. The panic and profiteering spread as quickly as a rumor. Within days, civil defense offices nationwide ran out of booklets that had sat on shelves for years. Inspired by a *Life* magazine feature claiming shelters could save 97 out of 100 Americans, shoppers toured shelters outside supermarkets, in downtown department stores and at county fairs. Beside newspaper ads for patios and rec rooms, contractors peddled shelters: "Civil Defense approved, no down payment, 100 percent FHA financing." Opposite split-level dream houses in real es-

The boom in survival gear went bust after tensions eased and "shellout falter," as one wit put it, set in.



A Presidential letter urged Americans to "read and consider seriously the contents of this issue of *Life*."

Mushroom cloud cake blithely reflected a time, 1946, when United States still enjoyed a nuclear monopoly.

Berlin Wall, built in August 1961, was both cause and symptom of prolonged crisis over the occupied city.

tate sections, ads for shelters offered sanctuary from the new American nightmare.

Wall Street investors said the shelter trade could gross up to $20 billion in the coming year, *if* there was a coming year. "Survival stores" around the country sold air blowers, filters, flashlights, chemical toilets, plastic fallout-protection suits, first aid kits, food and water. Those two civilian generals, General Foods and General Mills, experimented with dry-packaged meals, and two dedicated scientists endured for two weeks eating only "candy-like food bars" designed as underground rations.

Meanwhile, fly-by-night shelter companies fought for their own survival. On Long Island, several homeowners paid $1,000 each to a contractor who dug backyard holes, then disappeared. After a shelter roof caved in near Dallas, the owner called to complain. The company had skipped town. Federal inspectors in Tennessee found only 3 of 30 shelters meeting civil defense specifications. "Well, what's the difference?" asked a salesman. "They won't be coming around to complain if it doesn't work."

Part fad, part fear, the shelter frenzy suggested that America was, in the title of a 1961 best-seller, *A Nation of Sheep*. Yet the flock did not flee as one. As always, public opinion was muddled by the experts. Edward Teller, the father of the H-bomb, said shelters could save 90 percent of the nation. Colder, harder data came from Herman Kahn, the author of the authoritative *On Thermonuclear War*. "Better 20 million dead than 40 million dead," calculated Kahn, the future model for Stanley Kubrick's Dr. Strangelove. Shelter opponents trusted their own experts. "A full-scale nuclear attack would probably kill everybody, whether or not fallout shelters had been built," said Nobel laureate Linus Pauling. But the Russians were building shelters, the RAND Corporation said. No, they weren't, answered reporters in Moscow and Leningrad. Massive shelter building would inspire a preemptive first strike, said the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*. On the contrary, said *Life*, shelters would firm up national resolve and make our nuclear weapons more credible.

Despite the hysteria, Kennedy stuck by his plan: "a fallout shelter for everybody as rapidly as possible." The Bible had foreseen such a final act: "Then the kings of the earth and the great men and the generals and the rich and the strong . . . hid in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains," said Revelations. Had humanity moved from caves to cities only to return to caves? Would survivors exit into a world or a wasteland? One by one, people searched for answers.

"I am a father of four with a modest income," an Idaho man wrote. "Last fall my five-year-old boy and I started digging. We shall start again with the spring thaw, and so we shall become self-sufficient Americans. . . . It's surprising, but a little sacrifice and effort on behalf of one's family and country makes a person feel mighty good." A Massachusetts couple came to the opposite resolve: "After agonizing over whether we

The crunch began in June when Khrushchev threatened war if the Allied forces weren't gone by December.

In November '61, the Soviets tested a new 60-megaton bomb–7,500 times larger than this '55 blast in Nevada.

owed our children a fallout shelter, we decided that what we owed them was a faith in man and God and a personal code based on love and brotherhood, *not* a concrete hideout and a personal code based on fear."

A year later, in October 1962, the Cuban Missile Crisis would shove the world to the brink of apocalypse for 13 days, but the tension over Berlin kept tightening for months, offering no escape from the beginning of the end. As Khrushchev continued to test weapons every few days, October's headlines ratcheted the fear: "Soviets Build Up Forces in Germany for Maneuvers"; "Pentagon Adding 10,000 to its Forces in Europe"; "Atomic Energy Commission Describes Fire Peril of Russian Super Bomb." After tests, newspapers carried radiation readings beside weather reports. "All autumn, the chafe and jar/of nuclear war," wrote poet Robert Lowell in "Fall 1961"; "We have talked our extinction to death." A Connecticut housewife agreed: "Oh, do stop talking about those wretched fallout shelters," she pleaded with her guests. "Do you want to spoil the whole evening?"

Talk of annihilation did not go over the heads of children. An Atlanta grade school teacher noticed her students painting mushroom clouds and flaming cities. "We are having an awful lot of trouble getting them to paint a clear sky," she said. A Massachusetts boy asked his parents, "Will we be able to eat the snow this year, or will it be radioactive?" As U.S. and Soviet tanks rumbled toward the Berlin Wall, the craze rolled on. Said the president of the National Shelter Association: "My best salesmen are named Khrushchev and Kennedy."

The survival instinct affected corporate bodies as well as individuals. Airlines, Detroit automakers, IBM, the phone company and Wall Street brokerages planned employee shelters. The Federal Reserve designated banks for postwar check cashing, though no one forecast Armageddon's effect on the dollar. A Massachusetts motel planned an underground shelter for more than a hundred, with half the spaces reserved for workers thought essential to a brave new world. Among them: an estate planner, a dietician, 20 municipal officers, a surgeon, a lawyer, a plumber, a dentist, a fisherman. Those who didn't make the team could try the Florida hotel that sold out 25 rooms to be built under an orange grove. An Omaha dairy farmer planned a shelter for 200 cows, while a scientist promoted a $30 shelter for the poor, built of old railroad ties and sandbags. The "poor man's shelter" proved a poor investment. It burned down in a brushfire. By early autumn, builders began to notice unusual requests from customers. Builders near Boston were asked to dig shelters at night, while families elsewhere told neighbors they were adding wine cellars, game rooms and "additions."

Once he took the leap of faith in fallout protection, a man's shelter promised to be, if not his castle, at least his moat protecting the family from nuclear siege. But what if the shelter door was besieged not just by bombs?

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Cartoonist Bill Mauldin poked fun at shelter mania but built one for his family–and their dog–just in case.

"When I get my shelter finished, I'm going to mount a machine gun at the hatch to keep the neighbors out if the bomb falls," said a Chicago survivalist. A Texas hardware dealer stocked his hideaway with food, water, four rifles and a .357 Magnum. The Las Vegas civil defense director proposed a 5,000-man militia to fight off nuclear refugees from Southern California.

Just as the Berlin Wall divided East and West, shelters threatened to split neighborhoods into haves and have-nots. Left out in the fallout, good neighbors would die pounding on the shelter door while good providers huddled inside around scarce rations. Turning to the church for answers, the public found more discord. Some churchmen said that families dug into their dugouts were justified in repelling neighbors as "unjust aggressors." But other clergy turned other cheeks: "I can imagine Jesus Christ dying gracefully. I cannot imagine Him gunning down His neighbors to defend His rights to a hole in the ground." Rabbis debated Doomsday morals while the Rabbinical Council of America recommended shelters in all new synagogues. Meanwhile, the Green Mountain Christian Church in Colorado became the nation's only house of worship with its own fallout shelter.

Thinking of building public shelters, the entire town of Norwalk, Connecticut, 40 miles from Manhattan as the fallout might fly, got into a debate. "What would we do," asked the mayor, "hand out identity cards and then keep out people from Darien and Westport?"

As the clock inched toward Khrushchev's December deadline, threats became the world's currency. The Soviet premier threatened to test his superbomb. Kennedy shook his own saber, letting the Defense Department publicly detail, warhead by warhead, America's nuclear edge. Khrushchev answered with a 30-megaton test, the largest yet, while his minister of defense menaced all of Western Europe: "It would take really very few multi-megaton nuclear bombs to wipe out your small and densely populated countries and kill you instantly in your lairs!" Following its leaders, the rest of the world shook its fists. China warned the USSR about Albania. India warned Portugal about something. The Congo warned the United Nations about something else. Riots broke out in Bolivia, Algeria and Ecuador. In this climate, going underground didn't seem so crazy.

On October 27, when East Germany closed the Berlin Wall's Checkpoint Charlie, American and Soviet tanks sighted one another across the divide, a football field apart. The superpowers stood eyeball to eyeball. After 16 hours, both sides blinked. The tanks lumbered back to their posts. A few days later, the Soviets tested a 60-megaton bomb, the largest in history.

But bluster was wearing thin. And at home, a measure of common sense set in. The Rev. Billy Graham asked the President to disarm the issue by supporting community shelters. Eleanor Roosevelt, noting that "people are going haywire," reminded lapsed New Dealers that civil defense was the government's job. Two hundred professors said shelters created a destabilizing acceptance of nuclear war. Describing Americans as escapists, "hiding from the future," anthropologist Margaret Mead averred that armed shelters were "the logical end of this retreat from trust in and responsibility for others."

Tensions relaxed to ordinary nail-biting

In November, Kennedy and Khrushchev, who had been exchanging private letters for a month, agreed to talk about Berlin. Khrushchev soon withdrew the December deadline, and tensions relaxed to ordinary nail-biting, while aftershocks rattled the windows. Just before Americans gave thanks for still being around at Thanksgiving, a Manhattan department store displayed its "Shelters for Living." Crowds browsed through the interior-decorated shelters with full library and music room, but few were willing to sink $20,000 into the hole of angst. By December, when the Defense Department began posting "Fallout Shelter" signs on some public buildings and stocking them with rations, the survival boom was already going bust. A government booklet, with chapters such as "Shelter Living Will Be as Healthy as You Make It," lay untouched on post office counters. Kennedy, under attack for having caused the craze, retreated. "Let us concentrate more on keeping enemy bombers and missiles away from our shores and concentrate less on keeping

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neighbors away from our shelters," he announced.

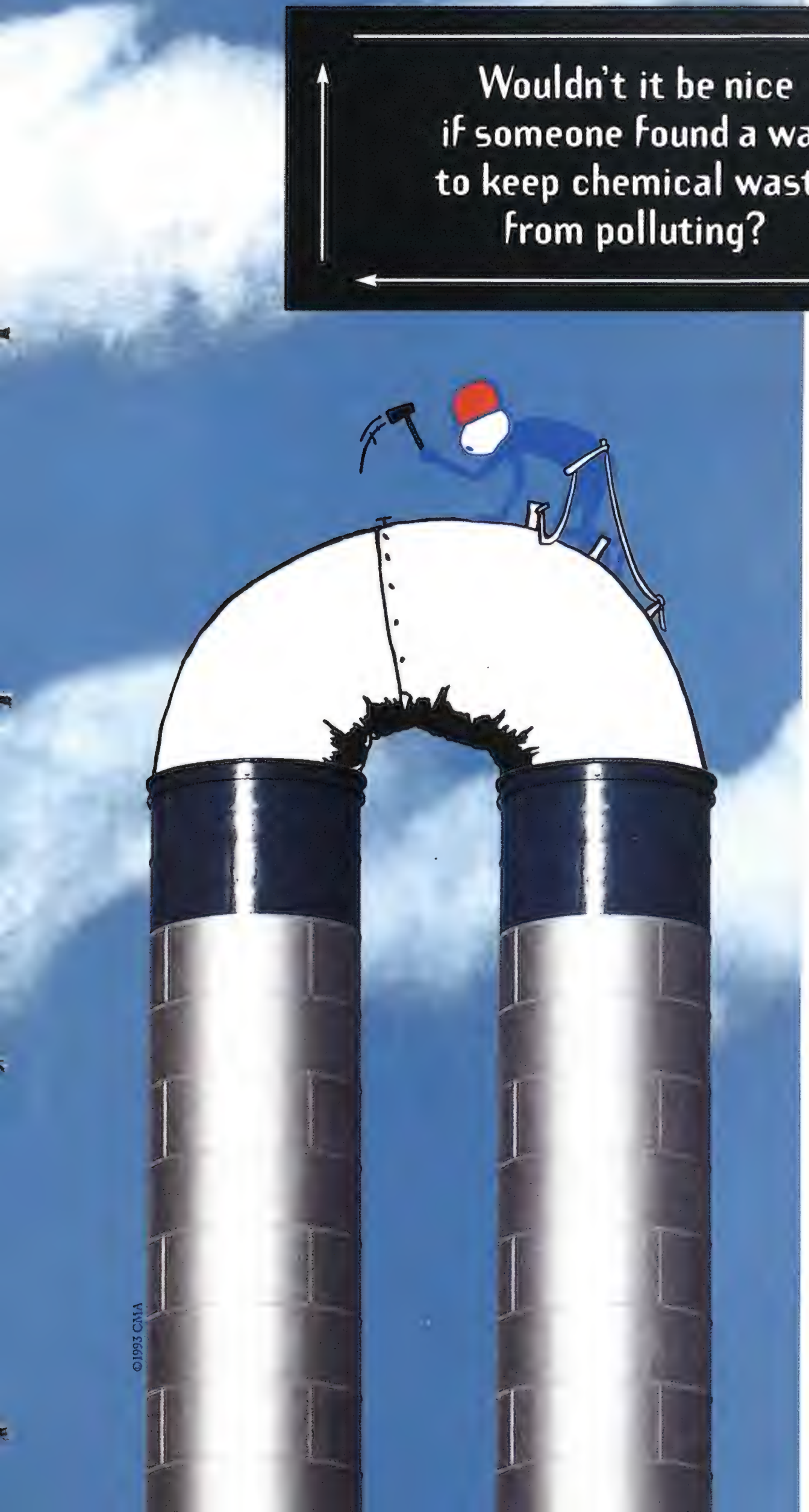
A few years later, a Detroit newspaper ran an unusual classified ad. "Pre-fab steel demonstration fallout shelter, without charge if you disassemble and erect in your basement." During the Cuban Missile Crisis, the Michigan survival merchant had discounted his models to $100, offering "Fallout Shelters–While They Last." He sold none. Soon, he and 600 other failed shelter firms couldn't give away backyard survival.

Weapons stockpiles continued to grow, but the nation buried its fears again. By 1970, with Vietnam and an arsenal of other problems on their minds, the majority of Americans who called the nuclear threat the nation's most pressing problem in 1961 didn't even list it among their concerns. "When the skies are clear no one is interested," Kennedy had said after the shelter skelter. "Then when the clouds come, and after all, we have no insurance that they will not come, everyone will wonder why more wasn't done."

In the early 1980s, NATO cruise missiles in Europe squared off with Soviet SS-20s. And like some Ghost of Apocalypse Past, shelters briefly surfaced to tempt Doomsday prophets and profiteers again. A Utah developer advertised upscale underground condos–their eight-inch-thick concrete walls painted with outdoor scenes–stocked with the usual line of Armageddon accessories. "Terrene Ark I" sold 65 units in a few months. But the final word on shelters, for now at least, began the day after *The Day After*, ABC's post-World War III movie. After it was shown in 1983, a businessman bought a limestone cave, creating a multilevel, cedar-paneled, appliance-laden nuclear sanctuary in the Ozarks (below). When *glasnost* stilled the winds of war, he dropped the price to a mere $3.3 million.

Some of the older shelters have found use as wine cellars, storm cellars, mushroom gardens or sites for teenage parties. But thousands of other nuclear bunkers, the Peace-O-Mind and Acme models, the tanks and basement bricks, lie scattered underground like so many fossils from an epoch of fear.

In 1983, nuclear jitters resurfaced, scaring some rich survivalists into building elaborate refuges. This one, a remodeled Arkansas cave, was sealed with 11 coats of epoxy and had tinkling waterfall behind Dad's sofa.



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By Michael Kernan

One man's fantasy stands tall in a jungle in Mexico

The Surrealist poet, self-styled architect and arts patron Edward James liked to put his ideas into concrete form before they got away

James and pet macaw relax at home. Of his constant bird companions he once said, "I am turning into a parrot."

We jounce for five hours in a pickup truck heading west from Tampico over the dusty Mexican plain to the Sierra Madre, up and up into a green world–peaks as sudden as the mountains of Moorea, tree-covered jagged ranges huge enough to be the molars of God, past coffee plantations, ramping bougainvillea, banana trees, crashing streams–and on to the very top, through the steep hilltop town of Xilitla to reach at last the hidden city that Edward James, the eccentric British Surrealist, built in the deepest jungle, a swirling dream in concrete, a fantasy of shapes that marries Gaudí, Escher, Borromini, Simon Rodia and the Emerald City of Oz.

With my guide I slip through the gate of this amazing place, called Las Posas after its nine pools strung along a winding jungle river, connected by waterfalls. I climb a 20-foot concrete cactus, up freestanding steps to a mushroom platform, up again on spiraling stairs that finally wind themselves around the great shaft and disappear. Enormous fluted columns all around. Eight-foot walls with tear-shaped holes, a moongate, a path bordered by erectile mosaic serpents. Great gates framed in wrought-iron stars. Concrete leaves big enough to walk on, bulbous concrete flowers in yellow, red, green, blue, white, purple. Gourd shapes. Calabash shapes. Dolphin shapes. Stairs that lead straight up into space and stop.

Sixty-foot towers and "stairways without end" rise amid rich vegetation of James' Mexican estate, Las Posas.

With its raw concrete patinaed by green mildew, rusting corrugated steel and neglected stretches of fence bent by fallen trees, Las Posas feels like a Sleeping Beauty castle arrested in time before it was quite finished.

A gazebo here, and close by, a tiny apartment four stories up with glass windows, two freezers, a fireplace, archways, glass bricks and a collection of perfume bottles. Ferns everywhere, lianas, thickset trees, all so intertwined with the constructions that it is impossible to tell where the jungle leaves off and the invention begins. Tucked into the steep hillside, I find a storeroom crammed with the beautiful wooden molds made by local carpenters for all these fantastic shapes. Also James' four-man sedan chair. And a stone hand nearly as tall as a man. Beside it, a nine-foot dome, almost an Olmec head, beset with columns that blossom out on top, and more bamboo-like columns, so delicate that they quiver when a bird takes off from them. Some of the fantasies have names: the House With a Roof Like a Whale, the House With Three Stories That Might Be Five, the Stegosaurus Column, the Fleur-de-Lys Bridge and Cornucopia, the St. Peter and St. Paul Gate, the Temple of the Ducks, the House Destined To Be a Cinema.

The waterfalls, especially the biggest one, more than 80 feet high, are embellished with platforms, curving walls, flying buttresses that may hold up the entire bank or may do nothing at all, battlements, mysterious little prows jutting into the pools. The lower pools have diving boards and small sand beaches for the local people who come here to swim.

Everywhere, underfoot and up wall corners and winding around concrete bamboo screens, I see electric conduits. In 1979, when the place was as nearly complete as it ever would be, James had lines brought in from Xilitla and lit up the mountainside like a fairyland every night.

Talk about magic. Everyone in town came to see. Las Posas was locally famous, of course. It had been abuilding since 1949, and from 1962 on, employed as many as 150 workers at one time. By the time he died, in 1984, James had sunk millions into the project.

Here and there, snug among the six-foot-thick columns (designed eventually to support enormous planters and an aviary) and barrel vaults and groined arches and framed windows, I noticed all sorts of cages. A little aviary for parrots and flamingos, a screened cage for the ocelots, a deer corral, a two-story room for small monkeys, a turtle pool, a 20-foot concrete pool shaped like a human eye, its pupil five feet across. This was where the crocodiles often played, our guide mentioned casually.

Edward James adored animals. When he visited Mexico City he always stayed at the elegant but modest old Francis Hotel or the Majestic, because they let him keep his animals there. Once a guest complained that there were mice in the hotel. She was sure she had seen one in the hall. The manager replied, "Oh no. They're not the hotel's mice. They belong to Mr. James in the room next to yours. He feeds them to his boa constrictors."

James often wandered through his jungle home with a parrot perched on his shoulder. Once he showed a young friend how his own beaky nose and pointed chin were growing closer together. He said, with a certain complacency, "I am turning into a parrot, you see."

Las Posas is strange, but not half as strange as its creator. His American grandfather, already a millionaire with vast timber holdings, married into the mining wealth of the Phelps Dodge family before moving to England. One of his three sons, who made his career as the master of West Dean Park and its 6,000 acres in Sussex, married an Englishwoman who was reputed to be an offhand daughter of Edward VII.

Young James sits at desk in his Wimpole Street home, London. Behind him, Picasso's *Seated Woman with a Hat.*

Edward James was born to them in 1907, into a world of nannies and shooting parties, shuttling seasonally between West Dean, his parents' London town house in Bryanston Square and a summer place in Scotland. He went to Eton, hated it. At Oxford he had a Rolls-Royce and a silk-lined room worthy of a Sebastian Flyte, and he soon drifted into the gilded London society of Sitwells, Mitfords and Cunards, of Noël Coward and John Betjeman, of Augustus John and Randolph Churchill.

A charming person, Edward James, a wonderful raconteur and a lover of parties. His hermetic childhood had left him curiously innocent about the world of work. And impulsively generous: once when a friend

Michael Kernan wrote about the Battle of Tarawa in November 1993, the National Postal Museum in August '93 and the Holocaust Museum in April '93.

Composer Igor Markevitch lounges at right. All his life James surrounded himself with talented artists.

Dancer Tilly Losch, who was married to James from 1931 to 1934, shows off charms in an early production.

wanted to borrow his car, he gave it to him. But then a reaction–"They want my money, they want my blood"–and he would retreat into a sullen introversion.

He was a packrat who never threw anything away, and so obsessively fastidious that he would boil up a saucepan full of old paperclips, drenched in cologne, for reuse. Named to a diplomatic post, he almost caused an incident through his insouciant mistranslations and was fired. He wrote poetry and printed it himself, wrote a novel or two, fell in with avant-garde artists and then, in 1928, met Tilly Losch.

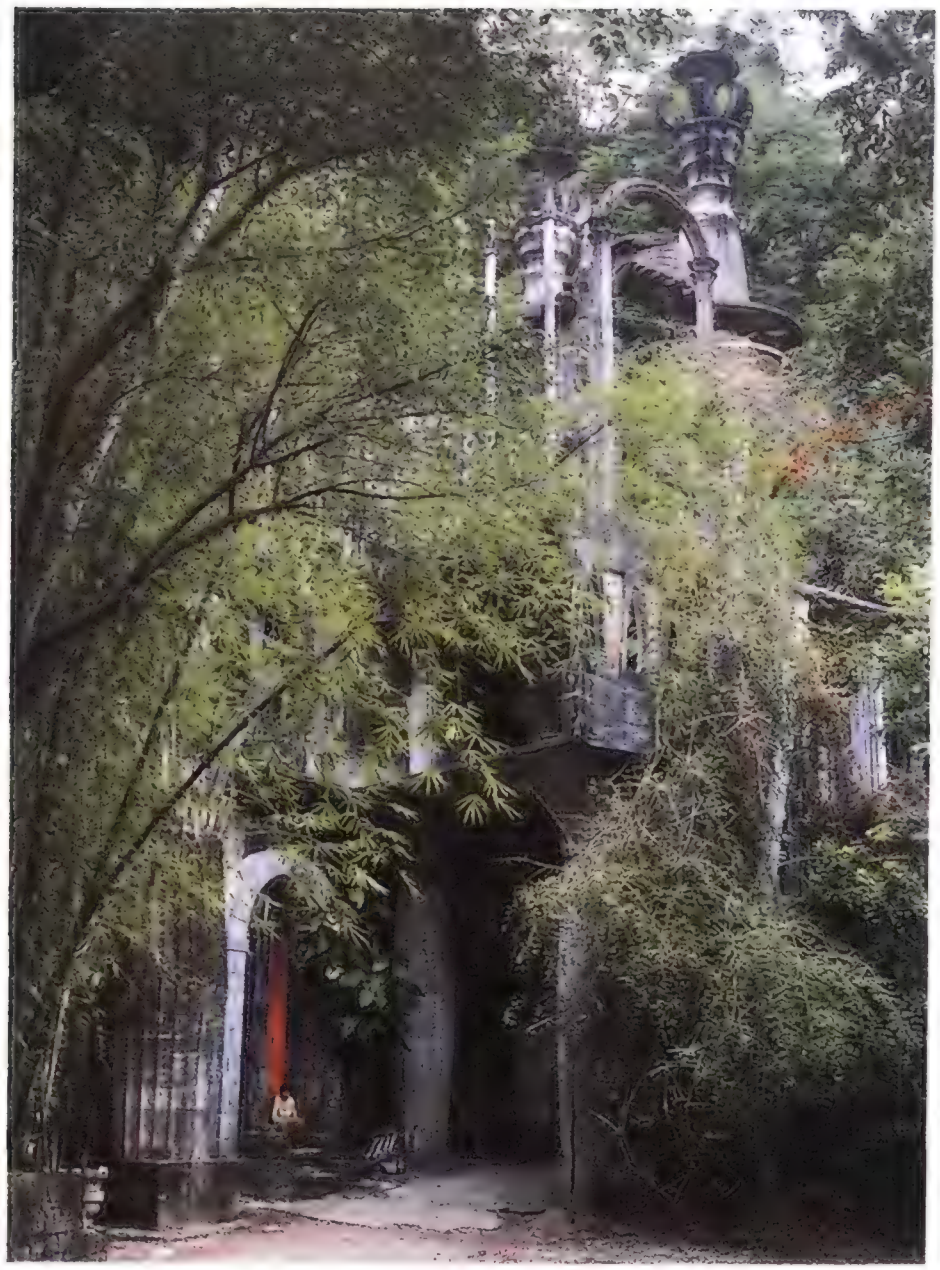
She was dancing in a Noël Coward revue but was celebrated more for her sinuous, wanton beauty than for her dancing. She filmed a performance piece that featured her lovely hands sensuously interlacing to Bach's "Air on a G String." James married her. He was 24.

Soon it turned out that she had fancied a marriage in name only (it happened in those days). She involved herself in a series of increasingly visible affairs, including a primal scene on a sofa with Randolph Churchill witnessed by a maid, and finally left him. To get her back James financed George Balanchine's first company, Les Ballets 1933, paying for three ballets for her, including the landmark Brecht-Weill collaboration "The Seven Deadly Sins," performed by Tilly Losch and Lotte Lenya, and another ballet with music by Darius Milhaud and sets and costumes by André Derain.

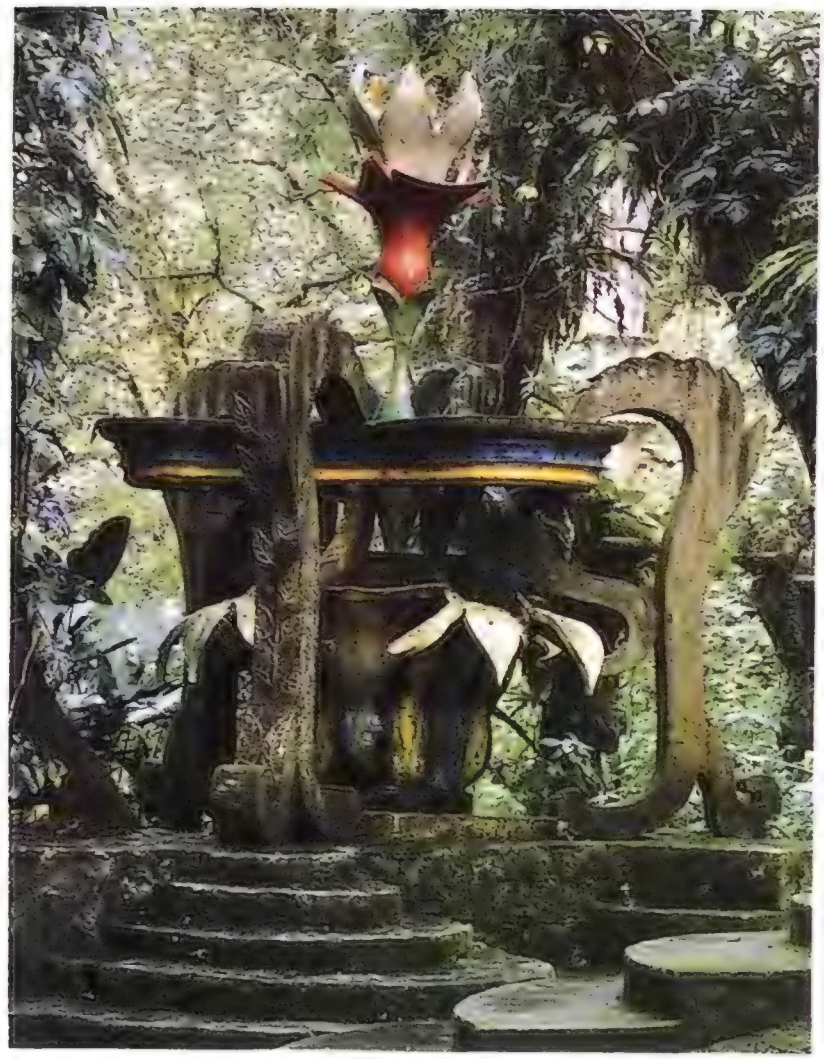
It was no use. Tilly sued for separation, charging homosexuality among other things, whereupon James scandalized everyone by countersuing, accusing her of adultery with Prince Serge Obolensky. Astonished and wounded by the outcry, for this simply was not something a gentleman did, James moved to Europe for a while.

There he met Salvador Dali and was so taken by him that he contracted to buy all his work for a year and to subsidize Dali's "Dream of Venus" exhibit for the 1939 New York World's Fair. He was already buying Picassos, and that same year, 1937-38, he patronized René Magritte and joined the Surrealist movement in earnest.

La Réproduction Interdite, the famous Magritte painting



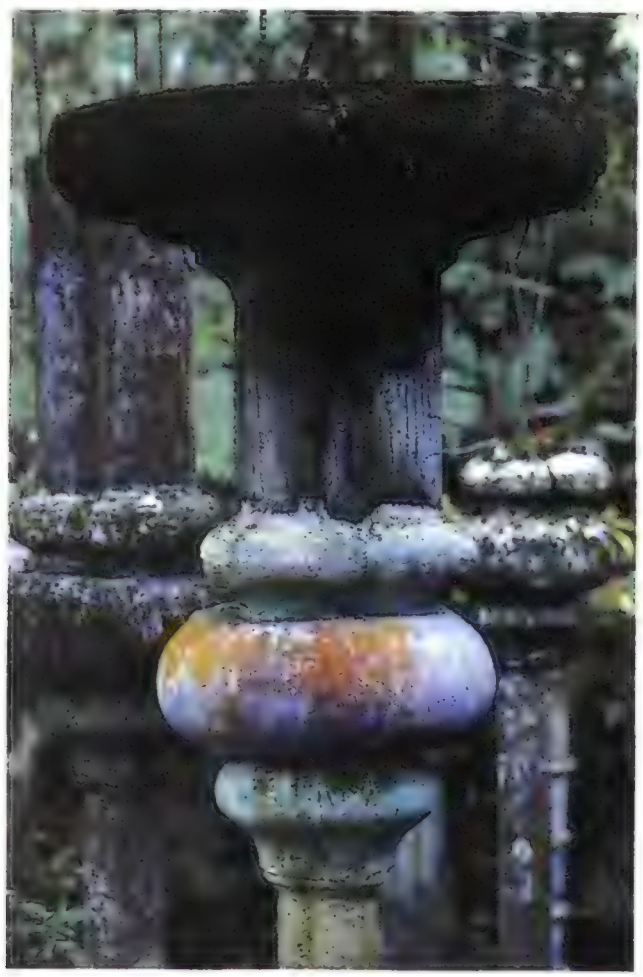
Entrance to Las Posas was planned as a giant aviary and monkey cage, with a cinema on the second floor.



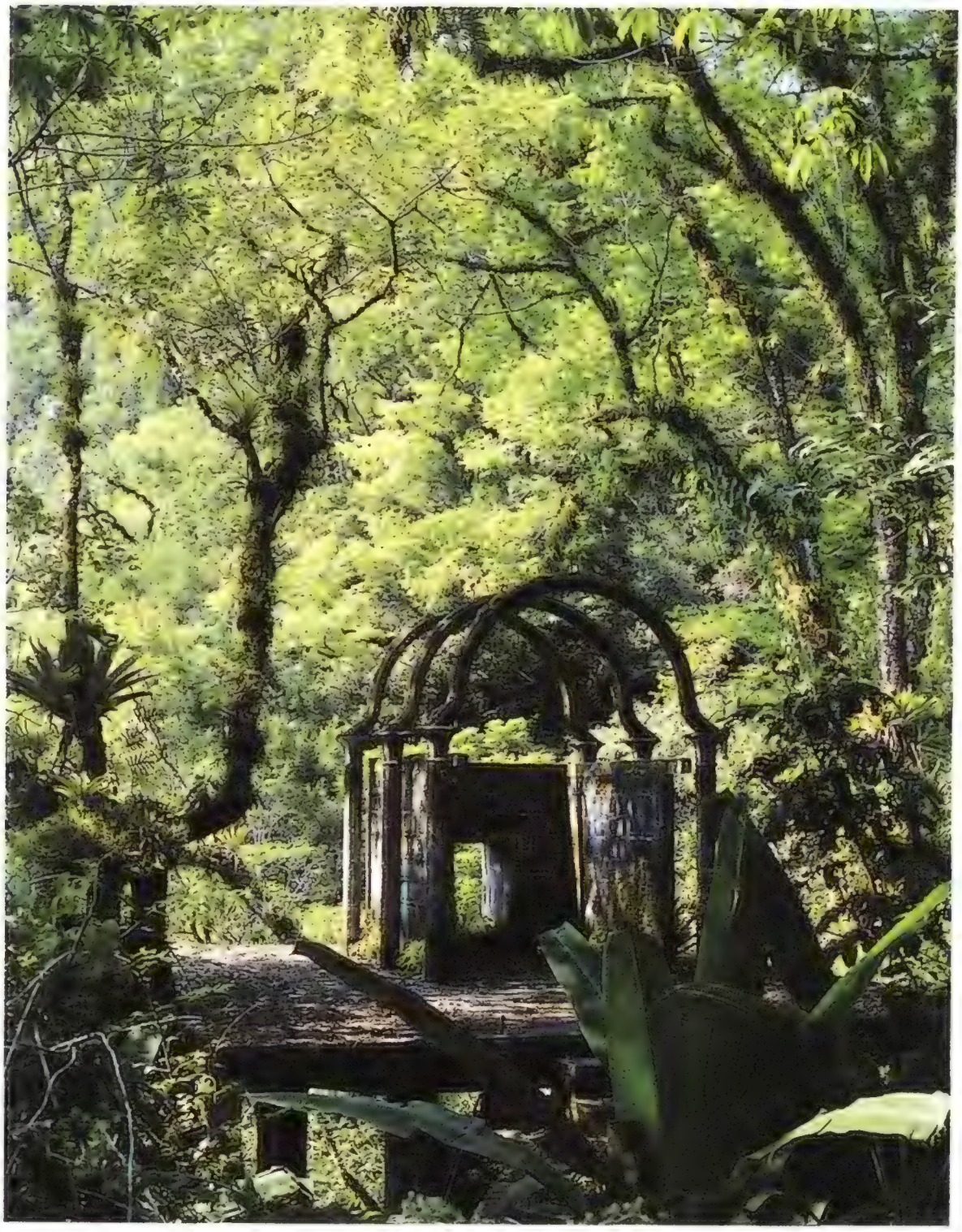
Elaborate fountain at estate's Plaza de San Isidro is a James fancy that took him five years to finish.

The wooden forms for diverse structures on estate were made by local artisians. They could be six feet high and incorporate as many as 10,000 parts.

A touch of the Surreal–Plutarco's right hand, front and back, adorns a wall near the entrance. The concrete hands are enlarged seven times.



Decorative capital stands in a corral once used by the estate deer; color has been mixed into the concrete.



A 20-year project: the House With Three Stories That Might Be Five; this view is of the fifth story.

The exterior and bathroom of his Monkton House were given the full Surrealistic treatment.

of a man shown from behind as he looks into a mirror and sees the same back of head, is a portrait of the back of Edward James' head. He is also the model for the head-as-explosion-of-light portrait *Pleasure Principle*, though one can hardly tell.

Personally, Surrealism is not my cup of fur. But in James' case the question does comes up: How does it differ from sheer eccentricity? I think the difference is that Surrealism has purpose. It seeks to shock the viewer into a new way of seeing. André Breton wrote, "The marvelous is always beautiful, anything marvelous is beautiful, there is only the marvelous that is beautiful."

James had Tilly's bare footprints woven into the stair carpet at West Dean. He had wooden moldings in the shape of towels hung out beneath the windows of Monkton House, his Surrealist country home. There too stood the original Dali sofa made in the shape of Mae West's lips, in addition to Dali's first lobster-telephone, designed for James, as were the Giacometti andirons. And mock-bamboo drainpipes, wooden palm trees, a boa constrictor lamp, pawmarks of Edward's Irish wolfhound on the stairs, a bathroom with walls of translucent alabaster and a medicine cabinet disguised as a bookcase.

Surrealism is about Things. The Surrealism of Edward James, born into a world absolutely cluttered with expensive things and yearning to be free of their magnetism (when periodically overwhelmed by stuff that he accumulated, down to old matchboxes, he would simply have it all wrapped in bushels of tissue, packed in trunks and stored in a warehouse), has a blithe humor tinged with disdain that I sensed often in Las Posas.

It is impossible to write about the man without dropping names, for one of his great talents was meeting people. It helped to be a rich patron of the arts. While still at Oxford, he founded the James Press for the debut of John Betjeman's poems and his own. Later Betjeman, as British poet laureate, wrote a poem about his friend, "Surrounded by Bells," which appeared in the *New Yorker*: "The sun that shines on Edward James / Shines also down on me. . . ."

Names. Edith Sitwell introduced him to Dylan Thomas, whom he sponsored for a while; through Dali he met Sigmund Freud and Stefan Zweig; as a regular at Surrealist gatherings he knew Leonora Carrington, Paul Delvaux, Pavel Tchelitchew and others; he sublet a house in Rome to Garbo and Stokowski; he commissioned works by Stravinsky and Poulenc. During World War II he came to America, a visit which took him to Taos, New Mexico, where he met D. H. Lawrence and entourage, including Aldous Huxley. In 1940 Huxley became his ticket to the pantheistic crypto-Hindu Vedanta movement in Hollywood and super-chic Ojai, where he met all sorts of people, from Krishnamurti, the great spiritual leader who would not lead, to the major movie stars and directors of the day (including, I note, that other builder of unlived-in cities, Cecil B. DeMille) and friends of the great Surrealist filmmaker Luis Buñuel, and on beyond movies to Hollywood's expatriate writers, such as Thomas Mann, Somerset Maugham, Christopher Isherwood and Gerald Heard, and on beyond writers to psychiatrist Erich Fromm.

Then Fromm invited him to spend some time at the American colony in Cuernavaca, Mexico. The country delighted Edward James. It was everything that England wasn't: no censorious social critics, none of that upper-class British inhibition, a concept of time that made this habitual maunderer seem punctual, and best of all, a climate that allowed one to grow plants and animals in lush profusion. For his wealth had become a burden and a source of something close to paranoia: more and

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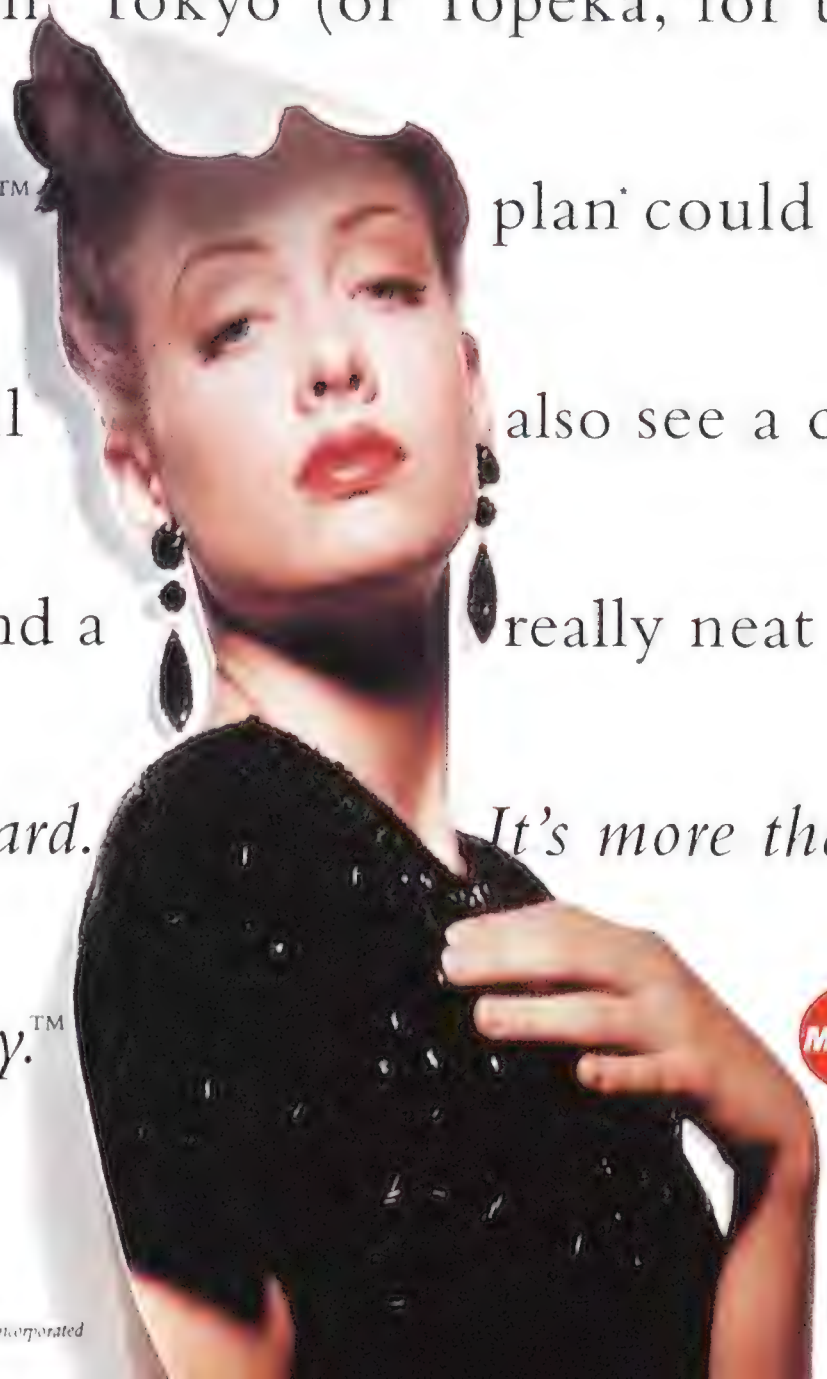

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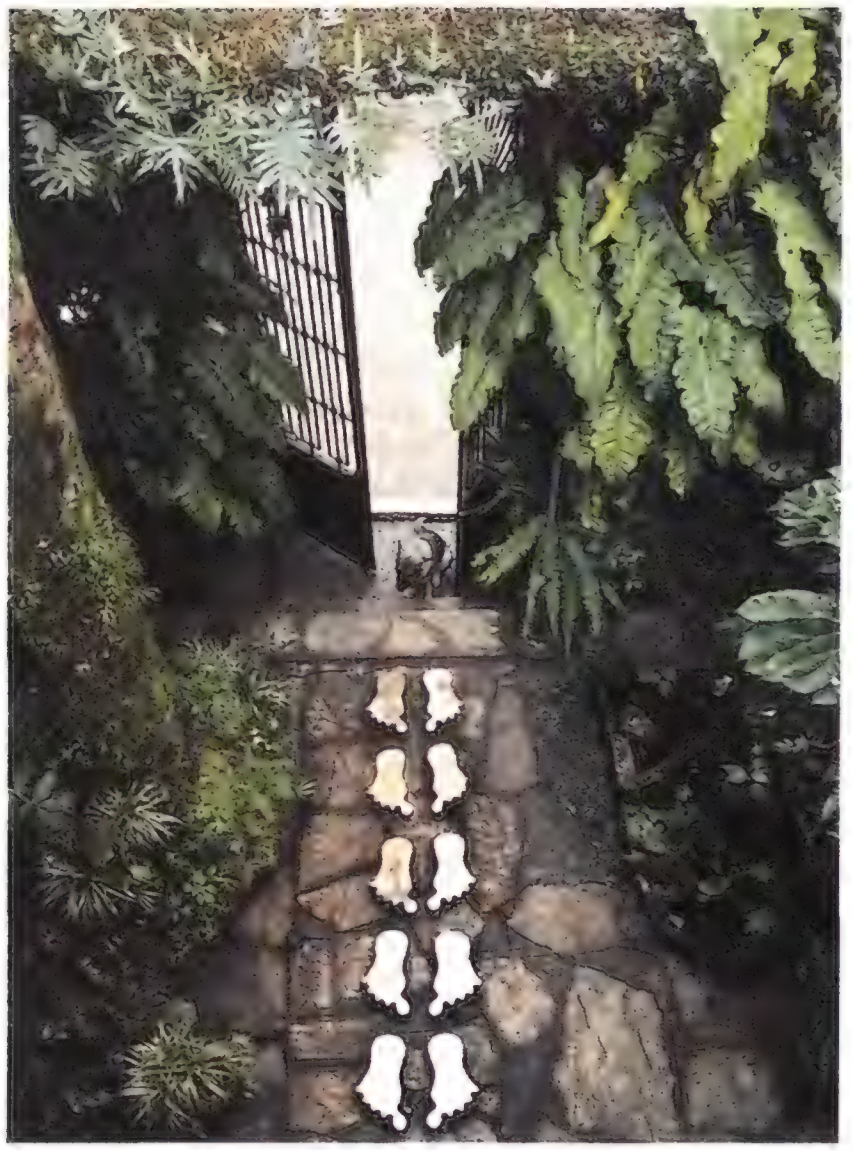

Inspired by James' treatment of footprints in England, his friend Plutarco used motif at entry to his own home.

more, people were besieging him for money, wheedling and conniving and suggesting worthy projects. One French composer's wife noted in her diary, "Edward James has arrived with his Rolls-Royce, his Duesenberg and, let us hope, his checkbook."

All through his life he doled out money freely to painters and writers, Surrealist or not, even as he built clinics for poor nuns, bought houses in Hollywood and Malibu and land in Mexico, came to the financial rescue of Rodia's Watts Towers and supported platoons of hangers-on. No wonder he preferred animals and plants.

Specifically, it was orchids that first brought him to Xilitla. It was by far the best place to grow them, he was told. He met his friend Plutarco Gastelum, part Yaqui Indian, part Spanish aristocrat and a swashbuckling former rancher, boxer, telegrapher and amateur architect, in a telegraph office in Cuernavaca, where Gastelum, taking James for a poorly dressed tourist complete with cheap silver watch chain, had directed him to the second-class bus stand.

"Oh no, thank you," James replied politely, "I have my car." Whereupon his chauffeur drove up in a Lincoln Continental. In any case, James hired Gastelum as his manager, and later sent him and his wife, Marina, on a tour of Europe.

In 1962 a once-in-a-lifetime frost killed James' orchids by the thousands. Crushed, he decided to recoup in concrete. He would build a city of flowers four stories high that no frost could ever kill. Meanwhile, Gastelum, inspired by Venice and Florence, had started to vastly expand his own house in the village of Xilitla. James came to live there with Plutarco and Marina, their daughters and their lively son Plutarcito, now known to one and all as "Kako." The two great structural follies rose at the same time, influenced by each other.

"I think Uncle Edward was a little jealous of my father," Kako says. "Sometimes he copied ideas he saw here in our house." And no doubt Plutarco imitated his rival too: just inside the gate is a series of stepping stones in the shape of bare feet. The feet are splayed and misshapen like James' own feet, for according to his story he was nearly crippled in childhood by his mother's refusal to buy him big enough shoes.

While James was alive, the Edward James Foundation, which he had set up in 1964 and which ran the West Dean College of art and antiques restoration, supported Las Posas. But after his death, major support stopped. James had willed the property to Kako and his sisters. At one time, state officials expressed interest in buying Las Posas and making it a state park. The locals already use the pools freely, as James had urged them to, and patronize a little café on the site. But decisions seem far off at the moment. For one thing, all those protruding steel rods will have to be expensively cut off and capped soon or the structures will disintegrate, an unthinkable tragedy in the mind of the young man who calls James "Uncle Edward."

Money to indulge every fancy

Early pictures of James show a slight, trim, neatly handsome man with deepset eyes and a firm chin, but Kako knew him as a bent old Robinson Crusoe, distinctly overweight, with a white beard and a stick, with gnarled feet and the money to do any wild, delightful thing that occurred to him, who lived in this house and talked of the grand, thrilling world outside. James died at 77 of a stroke on a return visit to Europe in 1984.

Las Posas, Kako, his father and a large cast of characters from James' life figure in the full-length documentary being produced by filmmaker Avery Danziger and his wife, Lenore, who have been working on it so long that they have had time to fall in love with Xilitla and have bought property there. Danziger expects to complete work next month. The film is called *Edward James: Builder of Dreams* and is destined for public television or a cable channel.

It is remarkable for its priceless record of Las Posas–with James himself guiding the camera about the premises, talking a steady stream–and for the portrait it draws of this engaging, driven man. Friends from all

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over the world, from actress Ruth Ford to Leonora Carrington to James Bridges, describe James and his life, only to be topped by the master storyteller, James himself, with his deadly ear for accents.

He recalls his stately, remote mother who, on her way to church, would ask a servant to send down one of the children from the nursery, "whichever one will go best with my blue dress."

He tells one interviewer, "I used to have to stay in bed long after the sun had risen, until my nanny got up and dressed me. The sun would rise early, especially in Scotland in August, and I would long to get up and play on the beach. So to amuse myself in bed, aged 6, I would turn the sheets into a great hall and the pillows into towers."

His accent slips easily from hard-edged American to fluty upper-class British. He talks of his animals: the giant butterflies that he named after couturiers Dior, Schiaparelli and Chanel ("the rather dull one in good taste"), the three boas, the parrots, the kinkajous, the ocelots, the ducks and deer and peacocks, the generations of dogs and cats and the four baby crocodiles a friend gave him, one of which "used to sleep in my bed and crawl across and rest his muzzle on my shoulder."

All of James' life, I came to understand, was a search for something to create. His novels never amounted to much, his poems were spangled with good lines but also derivative ones and downright bad ones. It was never enough to support other artists or even to appear in their work. The animals had to be returned to the wild. The exotic flowers with which he hoped to brighten the world would die all too quickly. It was in Las Posas that he found at last his true artistic medium.

It was of heroic scale, it covered acres of jungle, it was a world. Its bare reinforcing rods yearned upward as if they would grow still more columns and platforms in the sky, expanding forever.

Yet the strangest thing of all was the apartment that this unworldly accumulator of worldly things, this owner of land in England and America and Mexico, of houses from California to Scotland, built for himself in the leafy heart of his vast fantasy. The apartment has a bedroom, living room and porch on two stories. On one wall is scrawled in pencil his poem "This Shell": "My house grows like the chambered nautilus. . . ."

And it is tiny, a doll's tree house, the smallest possible shell where a man could hide.

Evocative masks prepared for a Dada and Surrealist exhibition in London in 1978 featured René Magritte's rendering of Napoleon's death mask alongside the young Edward James simulating sleep—or perhaps death.

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*Road & Track, February 1994. Top speed obtained under test track conditions by professional drivers using special equipment and procedures. Mitsubishi does not advocate exceeding speed limits.

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†The 3000GT Spyder's computer-controlled retractable hardtop was designed jointly by Mitsubishi Motors and ASC Incorporated and meets all federal safety standards for a convertible. Vehicle shown is a pre-production 1995 VR-4 model. SL model will also be available. Final production models, available for 1994, may feature minor trim variations. For information on the Mitsubishi 3000GT Spyder, call 1 800 SPYDER1. For the dealer near you or information on Mitsubishi's other products, call 1 800 55MITSU

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By Elaine Segal

'I want to stay in business . . . I like to be in business'

On New York's Lower East Side, the Jewish shopkeepers still do business the old-fashioned way–with a little haggling and a lot of heart

It is a sweltering summer afternoon on the Lower East Side of Manhattan and the streets, overlooked by century-old tenements and lofts, are alive with commerce. Huge, sullen fish stare out of their bins in the open-air Chinese groceries. Hispanic vendors cry, "*Barato!* Bargains!" before carts piled with T-shirts, jeans, hats, hair things, sunglasses and belts. Damp-looking shopkeepers lately of Pakistan and Burma sit in their doorways, searching out eye contact, murmuring promises of unmatched deals on shoes, perfumes, leather jackets, and ties. A man from the Dominican Republic blends a fruit drink for a sunstruck shopper as a parrot looks on from its cage on the sidewalk. Two African-American men in white uniforms sit at a card table peddling blood-pressure readings. Six flights up, a rope extends from a tenement fire escape into the back of an open truck. A seemingly endless cascade of green pantsuits are passed out of the window of an invisible garment factory where an unknown number of Asian women labor at sewing machines. The suits whip down the rope on their hangers at top speed, a spectacle of grass-roots technology I am happy to observe for half an hour.

As hot as it is and as dazed as I am by this swirl of activity, there is something about the neighborhood that is exhilarating: everywhere I walk people have a job to do, and they are doing it. They are fixing, hauling, making and selling. They are arguing, joking and figuring things out with one another in a medley of languages. Although the neighborhood is poor and there is no shortage of strain in the faces that pass by, the prevailing mood is not one of anger and despair. The atmosphere of the Lower East Side is charged with the hope, anxiety, ingenuity and determination of the newcomer. On these same streets a hundred years ago, other newcomers, Jewish émigrés fresh from Russia and Eastern Europe, were busy improvising their own marketplace, a great peddling, haggling, herring-soaked thing, whose traces I have come here to find.

Since the 1830s, the several square miles that make up the Lower East Side have been the first American home to a succession of immigrant groups. First came the Irish and the Germans. Then, in the 1880s, Russian and Eastern European Jews began making their way to the Port of New York. By 1917, one and a half million people, a third of Eastern Europe's Jewish population, had braved a hellish sea journey to make a new life for themselves in the country they referred to as the *goldeneh medina*, the "golden land." Disembarking at Battery Park at the south end of Manhattan, the immigrants trudged up East Broadway, their samovars, candlesticks, cooking pots, pillows and bedding on their backs–following the general but efficacious direction to "just keep walking until you see a lot of Jewish people."

David Tarowsky displays salamis (left), garlic wurst and franks at Katz's Deli on East Houston Street.

"Every peddler had his own tune"

"What does one do here for a livelihood?" asked a baffled immigrant who had been a scholar in Russia. "You do what everyone does," he was told. "You become a peddler." Approximately 25,000 peddlers worked the streets of the Lower East Side in 1900, hawking their wares in a mixture of Yiddish and English. "Every peddler had his own tune," recalls a memoirist. "The glaziers, for example, who were Orthodox Jews, cried out their wares with a depressed sort of tune." At the pushcarts, there was nothing that was not for sale and no sale was too small: the yolk or white of one egg, a chicken wing, an ounce of butter, a rag, a piece of herring the size of your thumb. With luck and perseverance the peddler would progress to a shop of his own, where he would often join with the other shopkeepers in complaining about the peddlers. ("They restrict the flow of traffic; they take away business; the carts aren't sanitary.") A variation on the street peddler was the customer peddler, who sold everything from socks to furniture door to door. If he was not a sensitive type and could tolerate the daily rejection and abuse that is the lot of the salesman, the peddler eventually developed a route of regular customers, who, if they didn't leave the neighborhood, became customers for life.

Photographs by Harvey Wang

The last Jewish businesses

And what about the immigrants who did not become peddlers? Concurrent with the peak period of Jewish immigration was the boom of the ready-to-wear clothing industry. As early as 1881, the Singer Manufacturing Company was selling 1,700 sewing machines a day, the majority of which whirred away in small garment factories where thousands of tailors toiled from 60 to 108 hours a week running down mile after mile of seams. Many of those who were not defeated by that drudgery prospered, working their way up to become clothing contractors and dry-goods merchants.

During the two decades on either side of the turn of the century, the Lower East Side was a small, self-sufficient Jewish universe that supplied its inhabitants with virtually everything they needed except adequate housing. The census of 1900 found that the neighborhood was the most densely populated piece of land in the world, with something over 700 people per acre crammed into airless tenements. Still, life on the East Side had its compensations. Without leaving the neighborhood, one could choose among 300 synagogues, learn English or vocational skills at the Educational Alliance, read any of 12 Yiddish and Hebrew newspapers, work in a shop whose Saturday closing was in accord with one's religious observance and, when work was done, promenade through the streets. Everyone, it seemed, was in business–from ad hoc entrepreneurs like the "relievers," who offered ready cash to the spendthrift pedestrian who might need to sell the suit off his back, to the well-established dry-goods department stores, where hundreds of salesmen roamed the aisles, prepared to convince the next customers yanked into the store by the "puller-in" that they had been blessed this day with the opportunity to avail themselves of the bargain of the century. There was no shortage of butcher shops, bakeries, cigar stores, pickle vendors, brass shops, candy stores, shoe stores, coal dealers, scribes, wine shops, booksellers, delicatessens, appetizer stores (delicatessens that sold all manner of savory comestibles except meat); and there were so many cafés, restaurants, ice cream parlors and cafeterias that a new Yiddish word–*oysesn*, to eat out–was coined in New York. There was show business on the East Side, too, a robust theater district where audiences wept over Old Country melodramas and thrilled to a plaintive voice declaiming in Yiddish, "Gamlet, I am your father's ghost!"

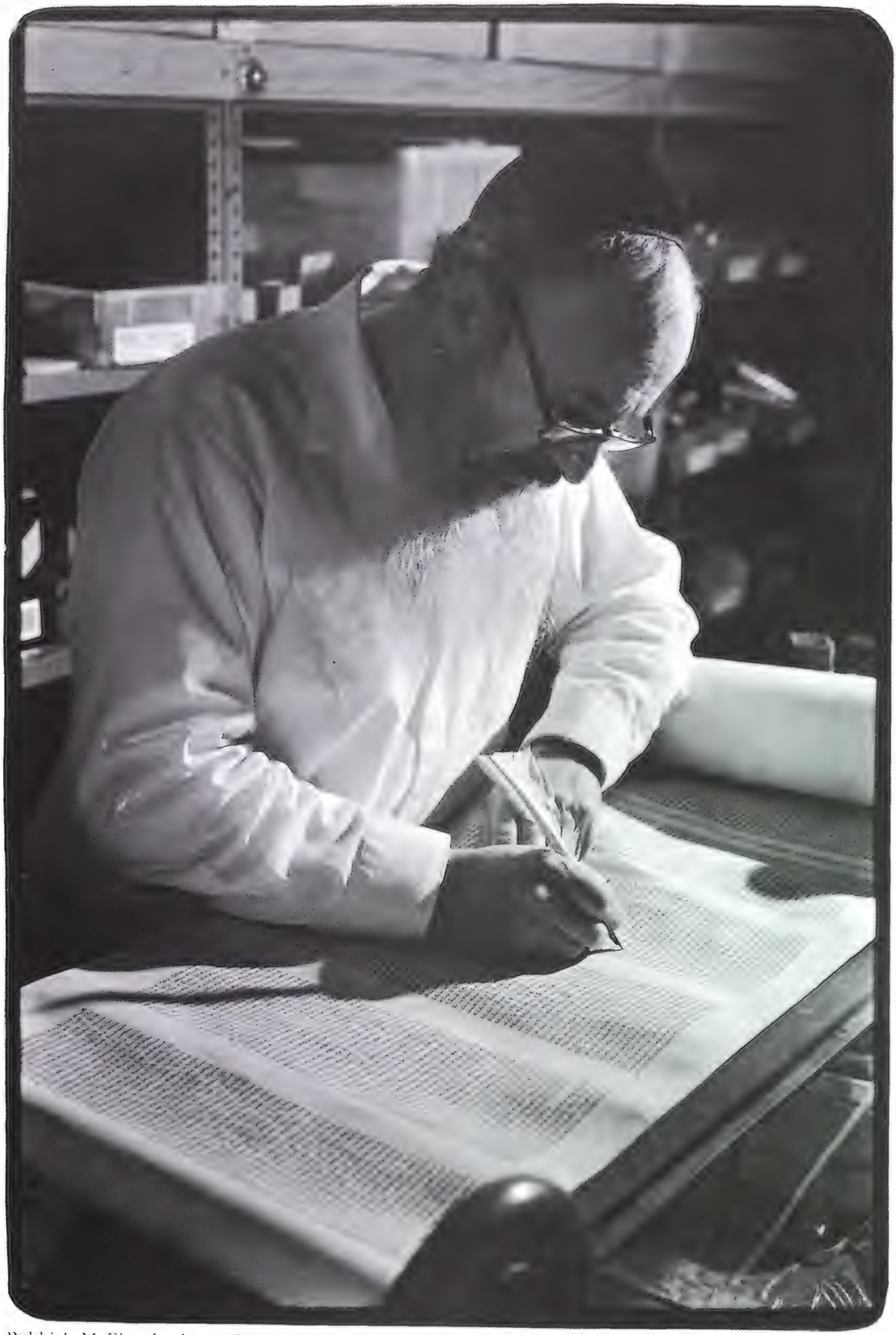
As I watch the clothing stream out of the garment factory, I imagine the ghosts of my own forefathers and mothers shouting out the price of herring, hurrying down the street to the kosher slaughterer with a Sabbath chicken, measuring out lengths of fabric to be sewn into bed linens and shirtwaists, every transaction highlighting the pleasure and urgency of human relations by way of fierce and witty haggling. But I am not here to interview ghosts, of course. I am here to talk to some living representatives of the handful of Jewish East Side business veterans who have survived many drastic changes in their marketplace.

From treasure to junk . . . to treasure

"We're the last of the Mohicans, dear," Hi Kleinstein tells me on my visit to the 121-year-old business he runs with his brother Jackie. The Brass Antique Shoppe is a store that from the outside seems to be in the process of slowly, decorously, vanishing. Its modest sign is faded and barely readable. Its windows are so dirty that the discolored urns, pots and candlesticks behind them can hardly be seen. Once inside the shop, the first thing I notice is a peculiar, dense quality of light that seems to embody the presence of time, an effect of the large, disorderly collection of deeply tarnished metal artifacts that fill the shop. Samovars, door knockers, menorahs, milk jugs, Sabbath lamps, copper caldrons, fireplace fenders, teapots and goblets intermingle with the species of object Hi calls "who knows?"–a piece of a piece of something that fell out of use 50 years ago. "I'll tell you something funny," says Hi. "From 1880, here's what happened: the Jews came over from Europe, *schlepping* their samovars, copper pots and *Shabbes* candlesticks on their backs. Their children became assimilated, they threw out their observance and they had no use for these old pieces. So they sold them to the brass dealers. And now I've lived long enough to see the grandchildren of the immigrants buy back all those things that the children threw out! Amazing."

I ask Hi whether any other Mohicans are still around. Yes, he says, a few old-timers continue to do business in the neighborhood–Schapiro's Winery, Streit's Matzos, Eckstein's dry goods, Beckenstein's Fabrics, Ratner's Dairy Restaurant, Katz's Delicatessen, Russ & Daughters Appetizers, Guss' Pickles, Harris Levy Linens, Ziontalis,

Hi Kleinstein, co-owner with his brother Jackie of the Brass Antique Shoppe on Allen Street, shows his wares. Started by Kleinstein's grandfather in 1873, the place is area's last fully operating metal store.



Rabbi A. M. Eisenbach, a sofer, or scribe, touches up a handwritten parchment Torah in his small shop on Essex Street. Sofers must master a vast amount of detail; only a handful are still active in Manhattan.

Louis Chock socks and underwear, Cohen's Optical, Salwen's umbrellas and handbags, Rice & Breskin Children's Wear. There are others, but Hi doesn't keep track anymore–so many businesses are gone. What happened to them? "They ran away or they died out," says Hi. Why is the Brass Antique Shoppe left, I wonder. Hi smiles. "Because we're here."

The slow and steady exodus of the Jews from the Lower East Side began as early as 1896 with the construction of the elevated train and picked up momentum as New York City's transit system fanned out into outlying areas. The East Side Jewish population, which peaked in 1910 at 542,000, has dwindled to 13,000 people, the majority of whom are elderly. Although this decline is the most significant factor in the demise of the business community here, certain other changes took a toll as well.

Until the mid-1970s, the Lower East Side had two valuable franchises: Sunday openings and discount pricing. During the days when the blue laws were in force, Jewish businesses, which were closed on Saturday to observe the Jewish Sabbath, were granted a dispensation to stay open on the one day of the week when other businesses were closed. People from all over came down to the East Side with their families to while away their Sunday afternoons shopping, providing the merchants with their busiest day of the week. When the blue laws were repealed, Sunday business dropped off. The loss was exacerbated by the advent of huge, chain-operated discount stores that, because of their high volume, were able to offer deeper discounts than the small businesses on the East Side. Then came the twin phenomena of urban blight and suburban shopping malls. People no longer felt comfortable taking the subway to the Lower East Side and were wary of its streets. Nor were they inclined to come down by car. Why put up with traffic and a long hunt for a parking spot when you can simply cruise on over to the mall? Unable to compete, many small retailers cut their losses and closed, which in turn hurt their suppliers, the East Side jobbers, who had already lost an important element of their clientele: the customer peddlers.

Still, business has never been better at Russ & Daughters Appetizers, where customers line up for incomparably tender sable and lox, smoked fish, pickled herring and pale gray caviar. Hanging in the window are long necklaces of the dried Polish mushrooms that Russ & Daughters has been selling since 1914, when Joel Russ established the shop. A large portrait of the founder looms from a wall where it's flanked by hand-painted signs that read "Halvah" and "Pickles."

Elaine Segal has written several back-page essays for Smithsonian *and does occasional pieces for National Public Radio. She lives in Vermont.*

"My grandfather was one of those Eastern Europeans who had a hard-work ethic but no patience," says Mark Russ Federman, who gave up his law practice to go into the business. "Customers would come in like they still do and say, 'I don't want this! Trim the fat off that!' and he'd reply, 'Did I invite you?' and throw them out. The business wasn't doing so well until he brought in his three daughters. They'd stand behind the counter smiling, and it was quite unusual at the time to see pretty young women reaching into herring barrels."

You will not see any women working at Rabbi A. M. Eisenbach's establishment on Essex Street. The rabbi, a scribe, is in the business of repairing Torahs, mezuzahs (ritual objects, each containing a parchment prayer scroll) and tefillin, leather prayer devices that wrap around the head and the arm. He also sells other religious objects, such as tallis bags, kippahs and shofars. His is by no means the only business on the Lower East Side specializing in Judaica–merchandise made according to laws, customs and lore reaching far back into time. "But I am the only one who sells only kosher," Eisenbach says.

Be careful when buying a mezuzah

In order for a religious object to be kosher, it must be made entirely with kosher materials. Eisenbach warns me to be careful when buying a mezuzah elsewhere because the parchments may have come from Israel where, he says, it is well known that children and women are writing them. When I ask if women are ever allowed to become scribes, he is firm in his reply. "No! It's not kosher! And that's not because women are lower," he adds. "It's because that's the way it *is*."

"What happened to all of the old customer peddlers?" I ask Ann Zell, whose parents founded the Louis Chock Catalog Corporation, purveyors of socks, underwear and sleepwear since 1921. Her answer is quick and definitive. "Credit cards killed them," she says. "Before credit cards, people who couldn't afford to pay outright for their goods bought on time from the peddler. Every week the peddler would come around on payday and they'd give him whatever they could afford: a dollar, maybe five dollars. In the meantime, they'd buy more. So the customers were always on credit, and the peddler was always moving his goods." Wasn't this a risk for the peddler? "No. He knew his customers. After all, he saw them every week for years and years. Anyhow, people were more honest then. A word was a word."

Mrs. Zell, her husband, Hilliard, and their son, Zalman, work together in what is surely one of the most peaceful and well-organized underwear stores on the planet. Watching the Zells and their employees whisking up and down darkly varnished wooden ladders to retrieve fistfuls of socks and pantyhose from trim stacks of

cardboard boxes, I think of a small-town library. Not that it is necessarily a quiet place, but there is an underlying serenity here that can prevail, for instance, in the midst of the high-decibel wails of a nap-deprived child whose mother is outfitting her five children with a year's worth of socks and underpants.

If Donald Schwartz, a 50-year veteran of underwear sales, is in any way vexed by the screams passing directly into his left ear, there is no outward sign. A big, genial man, he resembles nothing so much as a yarmulked polar bear, patiently measuring the older children and searching for socks with Barney on them. "We give personal treatment," says Ray Calderon, a Chock salesman for 28 years. "We always have a nice atmosphere here–the customer is like part of the family." "This is not a grouchy situation," puts in Hilliard. "Most people hate their jobs. We don't."

Wanted: a sheer nylon with a toe

"There used to be two or three dozen stores more or less like ours," Zalman tells me. "Now there's just a few. But we don't consider them competition. It's like a friend. We don't care if they make the sale or we make the sale as long as somebody makes the sale. Because if the customers can get what they need, they'll come back to the area to shop and that supports everyone."

The door opens. A shopkeeper from across the street escorts a woman into the store and turns her over to Ray. "She's looking for a sheer nylon with a toe. I don't have her size," he explains. "He'll take good care of you," he tells the customer, and leaves.

"It's a different culture here," says Zalman. "The rules are not rigid. You can bargain with people. If somebody comes in and they want to buy a lot of merchandise, we work with them. That's a real advantage of a small store. My father said I could make up any price I want. So people like that." He frowns. "Today, most people don't know how to bargain. You have to know what something is worth in order to bargain, and most people don't know what things should cost anymore. They've lost touch with value."

A tall, bearded man is knocking at the door. "Look, there's Zev," Zalman says. "He's calling the *minyan* for the afternoon prayers."

Zalman nods, and the man goes to the shop across the street and knocks on their door. A few minutes later, 15 men are assembled next door in Morris Trenk, distributors of T-shirts and sweatshirts. You can see them *davening* (praying) through the display window. At this moment, in seven stores around the neighborhood, commerce is suspended as individuals gather in small clusters to invoke the Divine Presence which, according to Jewish tradition, is most fully revealed through the aggregate of community.

Just a few doors down from tidy, tiny Chock's is the freewheeling monolith H. Eckstein & Sons dry-goods store. No mannequins grace the window; instead, a half-dozen large, soiled, stuffed animals slump on the floor in front of a series of sun-faded posters that depict a variety of outdoor scenes. The theme of the display appears to be ladders. Every two feet or so, a ladder or ladder-like structure leans against a background of patched-together brown paper whose edges curl around industrial-size staples. Hanging over the ladders are a number of dusty, short-sleeved white shirts. Here is a window that doesn't elicit the envy and despair one feels in front of a window designed to make whatever you're wearing seem hopelessly shabby and out of step; here is a window that says, "You don't have to dress up to come in here. So maybe the shirts are a little *schmutzik*. We'll give you a good price and you can wash them when you get home."

Walking into Eckstein's is like walking into a 75-year-long play set on a vast, raw stage where salespeople and customers throw themselves into their roles among toppling heaps of merchandise. Here is where the last of the bargainers and customer peddlers improvise passionate scenes around the price of bathrobes, handkerchiefs and T-shirts. Presiding over the action at the crank-style cash register is Herbert Eckstein; he and his brothers David and Eugene are the third generation of Ecksteins to run the store.

"What happened, ladies? Come back . . . "

"How do I feel about the business?" says Herbert. "The truth of the matter is–what happened, ladies?" he suddenly calls out to three African-American women who are leaving the store. "What did you want? What happened, Larry?" he demands of his grandnephew. "You were there and now they're out the door. Why weren't you in front of them? Ladies, ladies! Come back and talk to me," Herbert beckons.

As if drawn by an irresistible force, the women walk backward into the store. "What did you want?" he asks.

"I was looking for a half-slip," one woman answers.

"No, we don't have any," says Herbert. "OK," he says, hitting the high note on the "O." "Where are you from? Brooklyn? Are you married?"

The would-be customer laughs. "No," she says, "but I must have been in 30 weddings. You know–always the bridesmaid but never the bride?"

"A beautiful lady like you is single?" Herbert wants to know. "Are you Jewish?"

This strikes the shopping party as hilarious. "No," says the customer. "But I'm going to be in a Jewish wedding."

By the time Herbert has released the shoppers, he has determined in what synagogue the wedding is to take place and has given the bridesmaid his card to pass on

Herbert Eckstein digs change out of a cash register that's almost as old as dry-goods establishment he runs with his two brothers.

Eckstein's bookkeeper Nettie Pivovoz works at her desk amid the clutter of an office located in the back of the struggling store.

The last Jewish businesses

to the rabbi, with whom he is acquainted. "Hello, how are you," says Herbert to the next customer approaching the bench. "Who gave you this? That's $17.90, my dear. What else? *¿Que más?* Where are you from? OK, give me $17.50. I want to make you happy." Herbert takes up his carton of orange juice and turns to me. "What's happening today in this market–want a sip?–the neighborhood stores are going out of business everywhere. Big operations like Wal-Mart stepped in and took up the slot of the family store–what do you want to buy, fella? Melvyn!"

A burly, skullcapped salesman rushes to Herbert's side. "Talk to Mr. Melvyn," Herbert instructs the customer. "Put down your bag, stick around. It's a bargain, fella. OK. This store used to be a block and a half long and a half a block wide. Now we're down to limited proportions. Three years ago we had 25 help, now we're down to 5 or 6. What's the problem, Melvyn?"

An Italian customer peddler who has come in to buy socks is infuriated because Melvyn Glick has set the price at $1.75 a pair. "I paid for this here before $1.25. You're giving me like someone who comes off the street," the peddler says angrily. "Come on, you want to do business?" Herbert points out that the peddler has broken up the set. The peddler heatedly denies this. He insists on his price. Herbert tells him he's not going to do it. "If I walk out of here without paying you anything, you'll do it, don't tell me," snarls the peddler. "You need business as much as I do! And another thing. . ."

"I thought there were no more peddlers," I say to Nettie Pivovoz, Eckstein's bookkeeper of 17 years, who is leafing through a pile of checks the peddler has brought in from his customers. Like his customers, the peddler is on credit and pays for his goods as his customers pay him. "See this?" says Nettie. "They're made out for all different amounts and invariably some of them are going to bounce. It's a headache, but that's the way it's done. This is the only store I know of that still caters to people like the customer peddlers. There aren't many of them left–they call on older people who don't like to leave their apartments."

A woman brushes past us and slams six T-shirts on the counter in front of Larry. "How much?" she inquires in a West Indian accent. "These T-shirts are supposed to be $3.50 apiece," Larry replies.

The customer widens her eyes and glares at Larry to let him know that he has not only insulted her intelligence but the intelligence of her mother, her grandmother and all of her foremothers who have been sparring with salesmen since time began. She raises one eyebrow in query: Does Larry think she was born yesterday? "No, no," Larry says quickly. "Let me tell you what they're *supposed* to cost, and then I'll tell you what I'm taking."

The woman squints her eyes at Larry to let him know that she is alert to every defect in his character. Larry makes some calculations on a small notepad. He smiles. "OK. I'll take $3 apiece."

"No," the woman says firmly. "You won't be selling me T-shirts at $3. No, no."

Larry makes some more calculations. "All right," he says resignedly, "I'll take $16 for six. That's $17.32 with the tax."

The deal is done–but not over

Although the customer is working hard to maintain her fierce expression of displeasure, some small little something has passed between her and Larry that indicates they are in accord: the transaction has been completed to the satisfaction of both, and the deal is done. Which is not to say it's over. In fact, the woman appears to be more provoked than ever by Larry's intransigence. "What are you doing to me?" she inquires sharply. "What's the matter with you?"

"Give me 17 bucks," says Larry. "That's the word of the day."

The customer digs into her pocketbook and produces a $20 bill. "Just give me five back," she says.

"Oh, no," says Larry.

"I'm not coming back in your store here no more," says the woman defiantly.

"Why not? Didn't you have fun? What?"

She turns to me. "He should be selling T-shirts for $2 each," she says loudly. "And they are thin, thin T-shirts too!" she tells Larry when he puts them in the bag.

"They're the best T-shirts you'll. . ."

"No!" the woman interrupts. She is yelling now. "It's $2 each for these T-shirts!"

"*Wholesale* is $2.50," says Larry. "Here's your change."

The woman receives her change and her package. She gives Larry one last, ferocious look.

"Nice try," I remark.

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The woman smiles. "Well, you can't blame a girl for trying," she says dryly, and exits.

At 5 o'clock Melvyn creates an obstacle course for would-be thieves by chaining a half-dozen ladders together in front of the door while Herbert methodically tapes the cash register drawer shut. "How do I feel about the business?" says Herbert. "Here's the story: I want to stay in business because I like to be in business. This is a nice place to be. People still talk about my father, my uncles, my grandfather. This is a business that's been here through three generations. The problem is, it doesn't look like we're going to make it into the fourth. How old am I? Take a guess. Add ten years. *Retire?* Forget about retiring. That's ridiculous. This is a vacation here."

Herbert goes to the back of the store to set the burglar alarm. I ask Melvyn how he came to work here. "I was in Vietnam and got Vietnam stress syndrome. I used to be a road salesman, but it was too stressful."

But isn't this an incredibly stressful job? He hasn't stopped running all day!

"That's not stressful," says Melvyn, hoisting a huge box to his shoulder. "That's just moving. That's good. That keeps you alive."

It is the end of the workday and all over the neighborhood shopkeepers are putting their merchandise in order and waiting for last-minute customers to make up their minds. At Salwen's, purveyors of umbrellas and handbags, a man bends over a glass counter to examine a wallet as Bea Salwen looks on encouragingly. Irving Salwen sits in the back of the store on a little carpeted box with his fiddle by his side, a man so tiny and delicate and pleasant it is possible to imagine him sailing into the Lower East Side on a peapod boat with a leaf sail. "What I do is learn a melody and play around with it in my mind, and when business is quiet I sit in the back here and fiddle," Mr. Salwen tells me. He takes a list out of his violin case and examines it. On the back of an envelope in large, penciled script is written "La Paloma," "Bei Mir Bist Du Schoen" and "Sholom Aleichem."

"My father plays the violin," I tell Mr. Salwen.

"He does! Really, how wonderful! If he comes down to the store, we can play duets! Tell your father to send me the music and I'll study it."

"Could you play us a tune?"

"Sure!" Mr. Salwen says. "But before I play it, I want to tell you a story. A couple of weeks ago, a black man came in with a little boy about 6 years old and this little boy saw me practicing. So I showed him the violin and I was explaining to him about the bow. I said, 'This bow is made out of horsehair.' Then the kid and his father went home; I don't remember whether they bought anything or not. So last week the father comes back into the store and he says, 'I got something to tell you!' So he tells me that in the school where the kid goes they have some questions that they ask the kids in the auditorium and the child who wins, he goes to the top and they give him a gift and then he goes to the principal and he gives him a little something, an award. So in this one particular meeting, they took out a bow and asked the kids, 'What is this on the bow?' And not one of the kids knew except this one boy and he yells out, 'Horsehair! This is horse's hair!' So they gave him the prize and they took him to the principal and the principal gave him some kind of award to make him feel good. And that was so exciting to me!"

This story of Mr. Salwen's could stand as a fable about what is so exceptional about the small businesses on the Lower East Side. A little boy goes into a shop full of gifts and finds a tiny old man in the corner playing a violin who gives the child a gift in the form of a bit of knowledge, which the child then uses to get another gift–not just a material gift but the more elusive gift of prestige. But the gift doesn't stop there. It returns to the tiny old man, who is made to feel of use in his community.

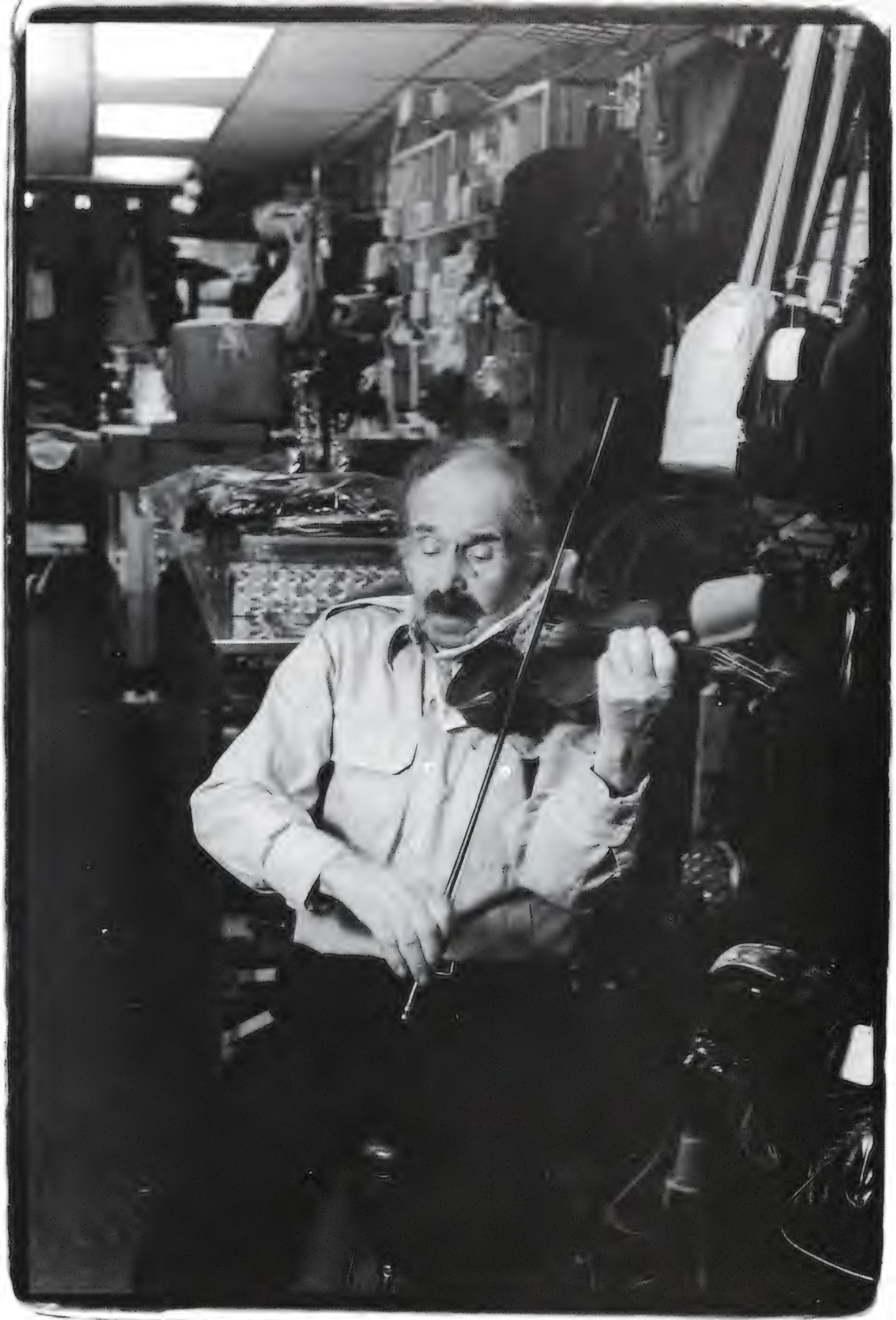
"So. What're we going to play?" asks Mr. Salwen. "You want a *Yiddishe* song or you want Classical? 'La Paloma' is a nice piece: *paloma* is a bird."

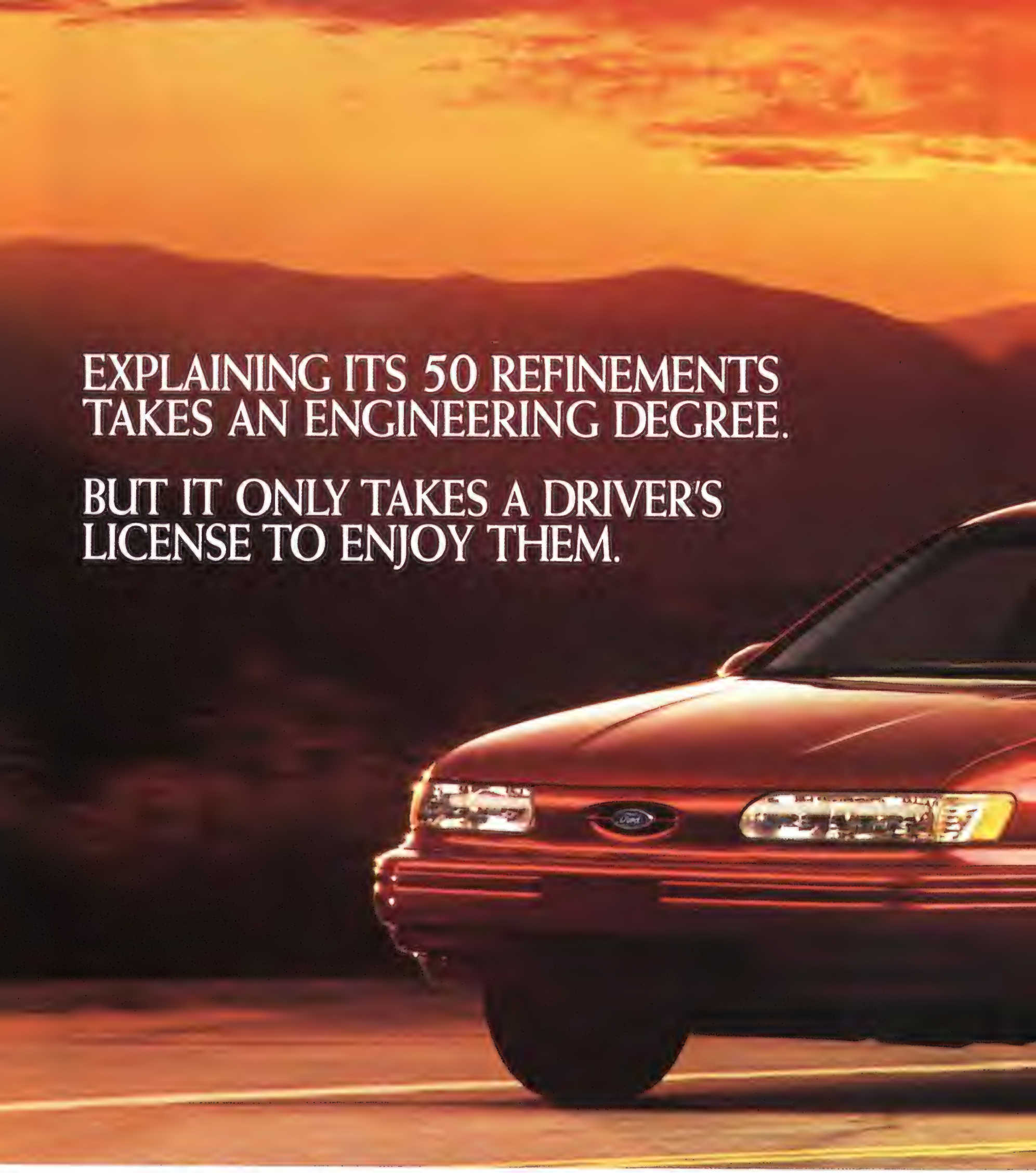
"How about a *Yiddishe* song," I say.

"Irving, please," says Mrs. Salwen. "Ralph has to go to *shul.*" She points to a man standing outside next to a car. "Come on. Let's go!"

"OK, so I'll play 'Bei Mir Bist Du Schoen' and then we'll go," says Mr. Salwen and, picking up his fiddle, he plays the tune with just the right mixture of melancholy and buoyancy–the way a *Yiddishe* song is meant to be played. "Again!" says Mr. Salwen.

Irving Salwen tugs at the heart–and violin strings–in umbrella and handbag shop his father started in 1902.





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MARLOTTE

Le Mitt

By Rudolph Chelminski

When the French play baseball, they play it their way

The author's neighbors in Bourron-Marlotte made him their coach, and ever since, he has been trying to make them accept the rules

One September afternoon a couple of years ago, I received a note from Jacques Margerie, mayor of my village, with an unusual request: Would I happen to have the precise dimensions of a "terrain of baseball"? Well, sure I did, right there in my good old encyclopedia, but what in Abner Doubleday's name, I wondered, did he need that for? I live in France, you see, and while baseball may be somewhat more frequently practiced here than downhill skiing in Kansas, I had always figured it was exclusively a big-city sport, limited to places like Paris, Lyon and Marseille, where there were enough expatriate Yankee eccentrics to infect the locals with the passion for such arcana as the hit-and-run, Texas leaguers and suicide squeezes. Events were to prove otherwise.

The village my family and I call home is Bourron-Marlotte, a Hansel and Gretel kind of place of 2,500 souls, located at the edge of the Fontainebleau forest, about an hour's drive south of Paris (or rather less if you're a French driver). Surrounded by woods and farmland, it boasts a grocery store, a hotel, four bakeries, a hardware store, a drugstore, two butchers and eight *débits de boissons*, which means places where you can buy a drink. A few major league painters, notably Renoir and Degas, have set up shop here at one time or another in the past, but we're happy to keep that a secret and let Barbizon, only a few miles away, monopolize the tourist buses.

My function in the Bourron-Marlotte social structure is to be the tame American. Whenever town officials have questions concerning my particular areas of expertise–the national debt, peanut butter gastronomy, Presidential haircuts, Madonna and foreign policy, CIA infiltration of the Folies-Bergère–they naturally turn to me. So it was for the terrain of baseball.

Bemused, I drew up a little scale drawing and sent it along to the *mairie*. Almost at once Jacques called me back: Could I take the drawing over to Jean-Pierre Fiocre? He's the one who needs it. I could find him Sunday mornings at the *terrain de foot*–the town soccer field. OK, Jacques, anything you say. I hopped into my car and drove over, intrigued to see what was going on.

What was going on was fascinating, an entirely new sport–baseball *à la française*. A rabble of men and kids was bunched around the soccer cage, dressed in the most astonishing variety of sporting outfits imaginable. Most of them were wearing baseball caps, but after that it was pure personal fashion: bicycling tights, tennis shorts, warm-up jackets, track suits, running shoes, soccer cleats, you name it. At the mouth of the cage, shoulder-high, was a four-legged wooden stand resembling one of those TODAY'S SPECIAL posterboards that shopkeepers put out on the sidewalk to announce haddock fillets at $2.99, and in front of that stood a guy holding a bat as serenely as if he had a fat diamondback rattler wriggling in his fists.

Message for Mr. Ryan: don't worry

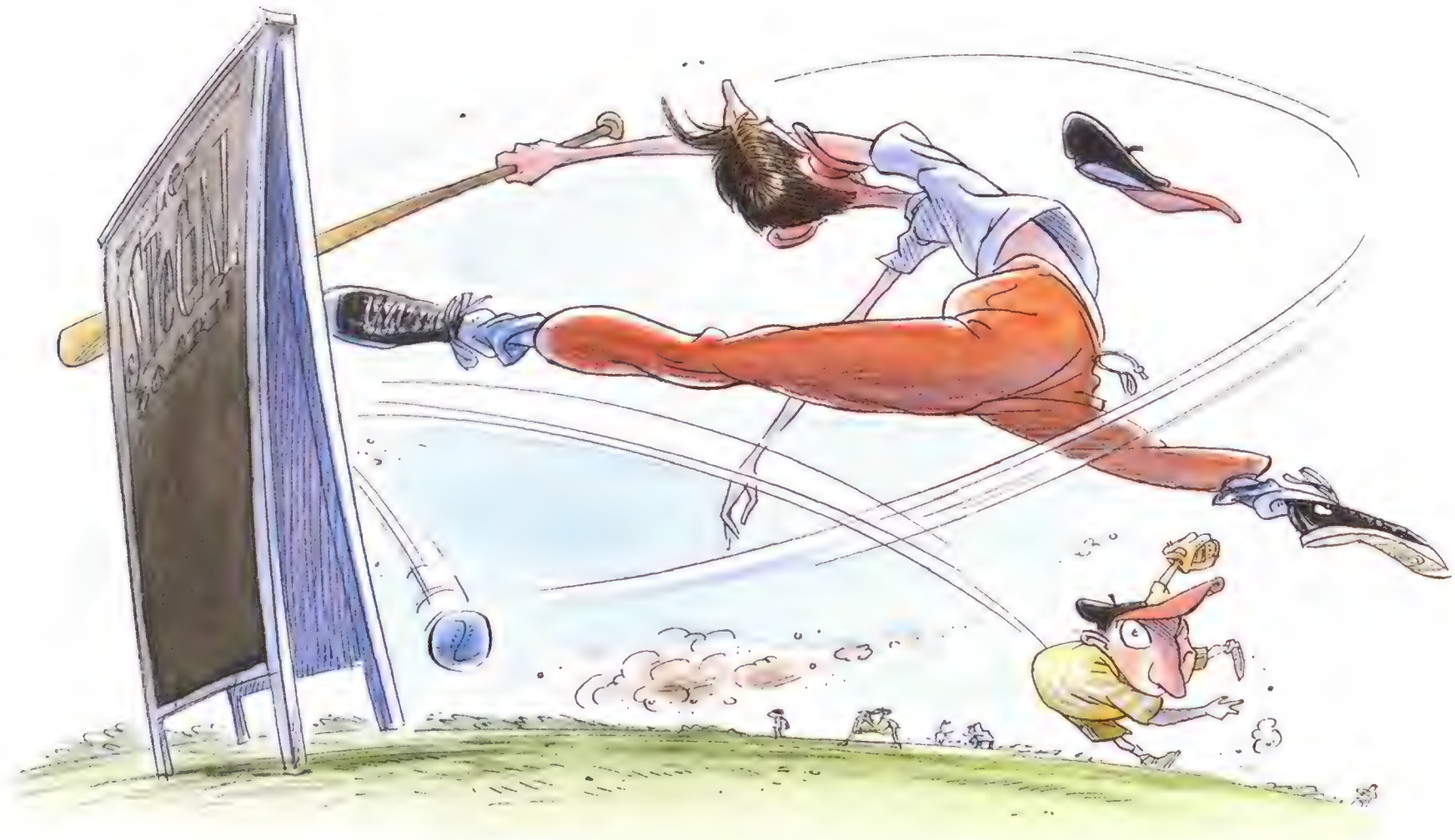
On the mound–well, not a mound, really, just a worn spot in the grass about 12 to 15 yards distant–stood Jean-Pierre, the pitcher, or "launcher" as the French call it, a splendid, mustachioed figure in white running pants and matching Cleveland Indians sweatshirt and cap. He pumped once, gave a little kick and delivered a fastball that must have hummed in at all of 40 mph. For the moment, anyway, Nolan Ryan's place in history seemed secure.

Wham! With a loud wooden report, the contraption behind the batter registered strike one, and I got the gimmick. Lacking catchers, catcher's gear and umpires, Jean-Pierre had invented a crafty and economical system for roughly judging balls and strikes. The plywood rectangle nailed to the frame was the width of the normal strike zone, and its vertical dimensions were the approximate shoulder-to-knee measurements of an average French male. Hit the plywood and it's a strike; miss it and it's a ball. Who needs umps?

For half an hour or so I watched the assembled Frenchmen take turns playing Casey *à la batte*. Jean-Pierre pitched and pitched, and they swung and swung, occasionally making contact for a desultory pop-up or a dribbling grounder. About half of them were holding

At first it looked like baseball wasn't in the cards for Pascal, Boris and teammates, but they're learning.

Illustrations by Daniel Vasconcellos



Watching the Frenchmen flail away at the ball, the author began giving them a few basic pointers, such as don't crouch at the plate, don't rest the bat on your shoulder, and don't leap into the air like Nureyev.

the bat cross-handed, which made the originality of their swings even more remarkable, but fearing for broken wrists, I corrected them and began giving a few basic pointers. Like really basic: don't crouch at the plate like a defensive tackle; don't rest the bat on your shoulder; stand sideways to the pitcher, not facing him; keep your hands together; don't leap into the air like Rudolf Nureyev when you swing.

Before I knew what had happened, I had become the coach. "*Le professionnel*," one of them called me, and I cringed inwardly because my personal baseball career had been limited to a lot of one o' cat when I was a kid and, in high school, the routine humiliation for the inept: second-string right fielder. Sooner or later, I knew, it would have to happen, and it did: they asked me to take a turn at bat, and they were all waiting to be impressed. Well, I hadn't held a bat for something like 35 years and wasn't much of a hitter to begin with. Now I was being called on to represent my country. Golly.

I swished cleanly on four consecutive pitches, never even coming close; then Jean-Pierre hit me with the fifth one–"*Oh, pardon!*" With my left arm stinging, I finally managed to lift an undistinguished little fly ball to left, but that was good enough for them. "*Oooh là là!*" someone said, and I was vindicated.

I hit some fungoes for the kids. After a few dozen fly balls, maybe two or three had been caught. By all indications, the kids were using their gloves mostly as shields to protect themselves from the unfamiliar white objects raining down on their heads. "One makes a match?" someone suggested, and instantly my gaggle of apprentice outfielders darted back to the soccer cage, relieved to be spared further missile attacks. Jean-Pierre was already breaking out rubber car mats for the bases–and regulation balls.

"You're gonna play *hardball* with these kids?" I asked.

"*Mais oui*," said Jean-Pierre in perfect innocence. "Why not?"

At length I managed to persuade him that it might be a little premature for that, considering that the group had no catcher's gear, no batting helmets, no umps, no insurance and only the most tangential grasp of baseball rules. Jean-Pierre grumbled that a game of slow-pitch with *la grosse boule*–the big ball–was kind of sissy, but eventually I prevailed and we chose up sides. With probably 25 or so of us present the teams were sure to be overstaffed, but no matter: considering the defensive skills I had just observed, we needed all the backups we could muster. When everyone had been picked and the teams were standing behind the captains, I noticed a lit-

Frequent contributor Rudy Chelminski, who fancies himself the Casey Stengel of Seine-et-Marne, is now contemplating a North American tour of Bourron-ball.

MORNINGS START SLOWLY, BUT EARLY, ON KIAWAH, with coffee on the side porch and the comforting rustlings of newspaper. We might be laughing about some story an old friend told at supper last night in Charleston or setting up a tee time at The Ocean Course. My [illegible] perches on the arm of my chair so I can read her the funnies, until her brothers thunder past on their way to bike rides and crabbing and ocean swims. Before she leaps up to tag along, she kisses me goodbye and I give her my squeeze of the hand that means I love you, too.

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tle girl standing shyly in a corner. "Would you like to play on my team?" I asked. She burst into tears.

Very pertinent commentary. Our game lasted three innings, and the final score was something like 18-12. Only four or five balls got out of the infield during those three epochal innings, but most of them became automatic homers because they just rolled right on through the fielders' legs, out to the underbrush. When the fielders ran back and retrieved the balls, they had no idea where to throw them, since everyone was screaming directions at once.

"To the two!" the shouts rang out as the runner galloped from first to second, and then, as he headed for third, "To the three!" By then the ball was usually somewhere close to the infield and, with the runner steaming around third and heading for home, the final, desperate supplication would erupt: "To the four!"

With the ball flying in all directions and 25 clamorous Frenchies crying out contradictory orders, runs tended to score profusely. Not once but many times in the games since, I have seen runs score on scenarios like this: high, angling pop-up to the right side, no one sure whose responsibility it is, so it drops somewhere between pitcher, second baseman and first baseman; with runner now heading to second, throw goes out into center field, runner plows on; center fielder's throw flies well over third baseman's head, and the runner comes home easily, holding index finger in the air and shouting triumphantly: "Home run!"

On the other hand, there were times when the runners themselves helped counterbalance the defensive deficiencies. One kid on my team beat out an infield single, took off for second on the next hit–but then continued straight on, barreling furiously out into deep left center, elbows pumping, eyes fixed straight ahead. Eventually, I suppose, he would have run all the way back to his house–was this his idea of a home run?–but I hailed him back in before he disappeared over the horizon. Shortly after, we made sports history: the first baseball stalemate I had ever heard of.

Bases loaded–and no one moved

Picture it: two outs and bases loaded, just like the movies. Moment of truth and all that. At this crucial juncture the batter tapped an easy grounder back to the pitcher, who picked it up–and froze. I had already told them that a base could not be *occupée* by more than one person, but now that all three bases were already *occupées*, no one dared move. It was a classic dialectical impasse. Oh hell, I said, just give me the ball. I walked to the home plate car mat, stamped on it for the force-out and told them I'd explain it all later.

How did this madness begin? As usual, it's all Hollywood's fault.

What happened was that Jean-Pierre, a 41-year-old farmer turned entrepreneur (he grows acres of beautiful grass, rolls it up and sells it to golf courses, schools and such), rented an American movie called *Major League*. It wasn't much of a flick–Charlie Sheen looks like a geek in glasses–but the action scenes of homers, stolen bases, squeeze plays and slides entranced Jean-Pierre so much that he marched right out and bought some gloves, balls and a bat, exotic implements that are just now becoming available in France, where Général de Gaulle's dour fulminations against *les influences Anglo-Saxonnes* are fast being buried under a flood of cheeseburgers, cornflakes and soda pop.

After cutting his teeth on the basic moves on the beach during vacation with his kids, he recruited Jean-Jacques and Boris, two local pals whose computer busi-

The catcher was splendidly suited up in ultramarine plastic, looking like a New Wave comic book character.

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No one knew who had responsibility for the pop-up, so the ball usually dropped between confused players.

ness often takes them to America. It was an inspired choice for the nucleus of a ball club because both of them possessed special baseball attributes. Boris as a boy had watched the G.I.'s playing in Fontainebleau and had even learned to handle glove and bat with them. Jean-Jacques, for his part, had lived for several years in America, looked American and even talked American. The guy's a natural second base chatterer. When he shouts "Come on, you turkeys, let's play ball!" you'd think you were in Columbus, Ohio. Columbus fades quickly into the mist, though, when the games get under way. This is something else–this is Bourron-ball!

Toward the end of that first year, two revolutionary events occurred that entirely transformed Bourron-ball: Stephane got catcher's equipment and we got a field. Why anyone should ever want catcher's gear for Christmas is beyond me–why anyone should ever want to be a catcher in the first place is beyond me–but he did, and he did. So, as of 1993, we had young Stephane behind the plate as "receiver," splendidly armored in deep ultramarine plastic, looking for all the world like one of those New Wave comic book characters–Bluebottle Man! Depending on the number of players present, Stephane either catches for both sides or alternates with some innocent from the other team whom we have flimflammed into believing that the catcher's position is anything but murderous servitude.

Unfortunately, when Stephane is away he takes his plastic with him, and we are reduced to stopping the ball with a little, green, vegetable-garden net more commonly used for keeping birds off tomato plants. It does not work very well, so we usually station a couple of backup men 10 or 15 yards behind the batter to shag passed balls and fouls. We improvised this system after Jean-Pierre, who has limitless resources of enthusiasm, tried catching without Stephane's equipment and got a foul tip right in the old schnoz.

We got our new field because the soccer team claimed priority over theirs, and it was hard to gainsay them; they'd been there for years. Luckily, Jean-Pierre knew of a nifty expanse of wild crabgrass that the town owned behind the railroad tracks, roughly 100 yards square. Mayor Margerie, who is not the least bit afraid of *les influences Anglo-Saxonnes,* was happy to give us usufruct, and well did he choose; indeed, the field has never been so well maintained since Jean-Pierre moved in with the tractors and rollers and mowers from his grass business. Within a few weeks it began to resemble those sympathetic hometown Tom Sawyer-style ball fields we all used to play on as kids before Little League came along and ruined everything: a scruffy dirt circle at home plate, worn, yellowed grass between bases, and bald spots at first, second and third.

There is a bald spot at the pitcher's position, too–in fact, several of them. Their varying distances from home indicate growing skills. The ones closest in are from softball, the old slow-pitch days with *la grosse boule,* and as they move farther from the plate they follow Jean-Pierre's progress toward Nolan Ryan status. I contributed to a few of those bald spots myself, in the days when we were in our larval softball stage. Benumbed by a long series of really terrible beginner batters, I had unwisely inched forward, offering only underarm puffball deliveries as if I'd been pitching to Shirley Temple at age 10. Little did I suspect that the next batter, a guy named Gilles, was strong and had hit before. He teed off on one of my puffballs and bounced it right off my noggin. For a couple of weeks my magnificent black eye was the talk of Bourron-Marlotte.

How do you throw a curve, Coach?

Jean-Pierre, who is usually our official launcher, took the opposite route from me: he moved back. When he first tried pitching hardball in earnest he could hardly heave the ball 60 feet 6 inches, let alone place it inside a strike zone, so he began at about 40 feet and slowly retreated as his arm and his confidence grew stronger. Now, after more than a year of practice, his fireball hums in over the regulation distance, and of late he has been asking me just what it is you do to throw a curve.

As if I should know. But in my position as the town American, I am supposed to possess all manner of arcane encyclopedic information. What, Boris asked me the other day, is the origin of "fungo"? "It is because it is

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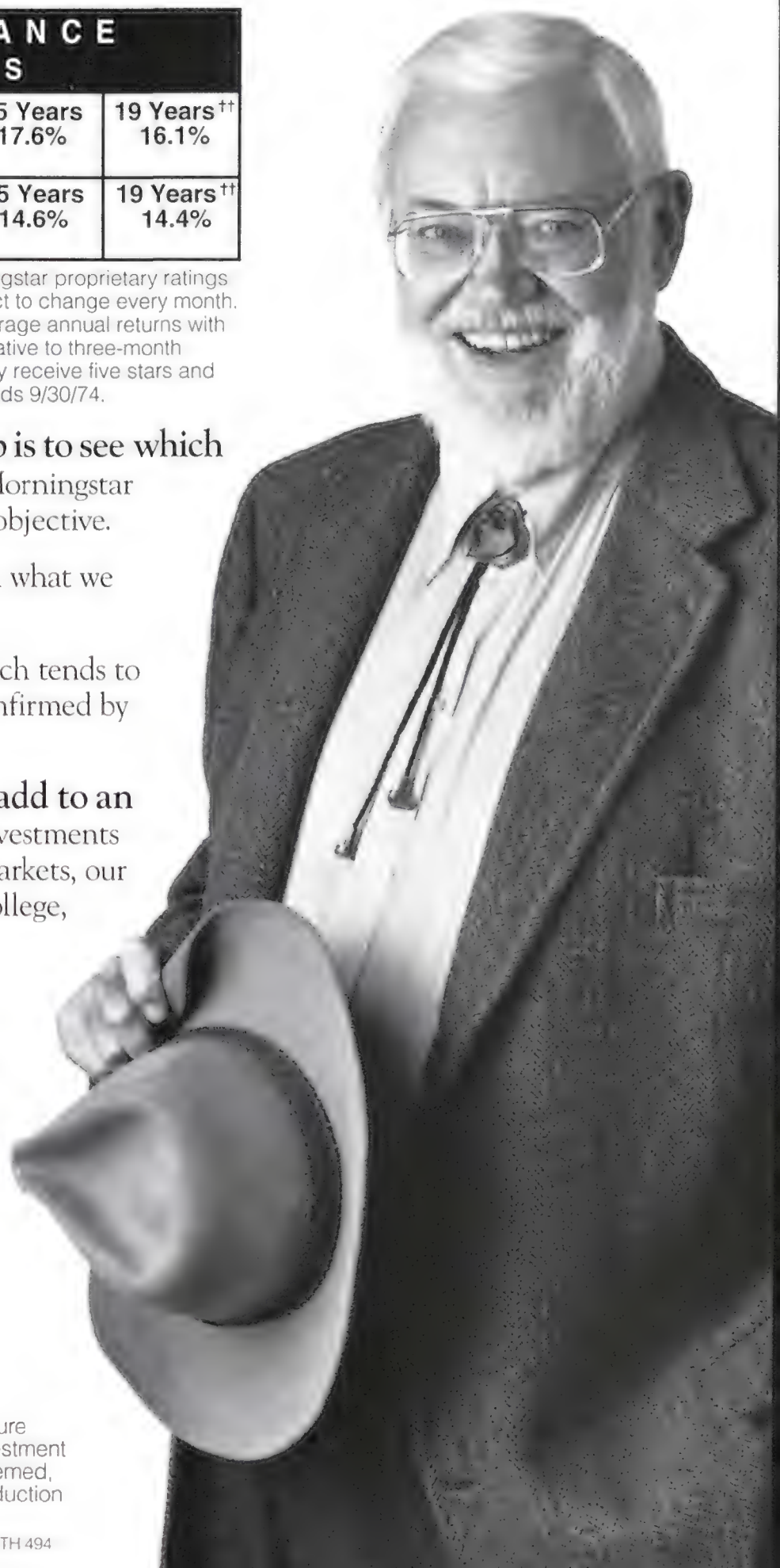

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SMITH 494

fun when the ball goes?" Yes, that's definitely it, I said with calm assurance, then went and looked it up in my *Webster's*. "Origin unknown," it said. Oh well. "And what is the winning score of a match of baseball?" asked Hubert, a recently recruited tennis player. Why, 40-30, of course, I said, and sent him out to play right field.

As the weeks passed, I was able to arrange a general consensus among the players as to the rules of the game. I say "consensus" because the French are a notoriously intelligent but also notoriously argumentative people. Despite my exalted standing as a bona fide American, the guys weren't always willing to accept everything without a fight. Fogged by distance from Cooperstown, bent by local climate and inclination, their interpretation of certain rules took on a uniquely native flavor. There was the universal force-out, for example.

For several months before my arrival on the scene, Jean-Pierre and his friends had been playing under the curious notion that a base could be "closed" by simply throwing the ball to it before the runner got there, regardless of whether or not there were any other runners behind him. The runner who arrived at a closed base, they had decided, was automatically out. We've got that one pretty well straightened out now, but I am still having the dickens of a time with fly balls and everyone's enthusiasm for running the bases. Any reader who has played second-string right field will know that it is a no-no to leave a base on a fly ball, but still today, after more than a year of Bourron-ball, I have youngsters who take off at the crack of a bat and charge forward willy-nilly, blinded by their passion for scoring "*un point.*" Flies caught and then relayed back to an inopportunely vacated base constitute by far our richest source of double plays. The only one, in fact. You don't see many Tinker-to-Evers-to-Chance moves in Bourron-ball.

The novice slugger was holding onto the bat almost as if he had a fat diamondback rattlesnake in his fists.

Even more extraordinary was the "batter's choice" rule, which I encountered one afternoon when some players from the next town joined us. A strapping lad of 20 or so, whom I had chosen for my team, came to bat, lifted a pop-up to short–and just stood there. "Run!" I screamed, clapping him on the shoulder. "Run, run!" But he just held his ground, adamantly glued to the plate, giving me the pityingly scornful look of the sage being forced to deal with an excitable idiot. "Why didn't you run?" I asked. "Because I knew he would catch it, of course," he explained. Somehow, he and his friends in Grez-sur-Loing had evolved the rule that batters had the option of not running out fly balls. As long as they remained at the plate, they could continue to bat even if the ball was caught. He was sincerely astonished and hurt when I informed him that he was *éliminé.*

Will astonishments never cease?

Where could a rule like that have come from? Who knows? Where does invention start? How could Paul Bocuse have thought up the recipe for *loup en croûte farci d'une mousse de homard* (sea perch wrapped in crust, stuffed with lobster mousse)? How could the zealous youngsters of Bourron-ball conceive of the idea of sliding into *first*? Where are the snows of yesteryear?

By now I've been involved with Bourron-ball for more than two years, and I'm happy to report some real progress. We still haven't found an A-one shortstop, but as long as the infielders block the ball with knee, foot or chest, I'm happy. In the outfield, the boys can catch most routine flies now, even if they invariably insist on doing it one-handed. (Two-handed catches are considered boring and frightfully unfashionable.) As the number of errors drops, the scores are beginning to get lower. Just the other day, it was only 4-2 after three innings. From catcher to center field, they are attacking this exotic new sport with a passion and dedication that can be truly astounding. Rain or shine, winter and summer, as soon as the field is even vaguely playable, they are at it, these Gallic maniacs, the kids and the old guys. And new recruits seem to come by every Sunday.

A few months back we got Gwendolyne. She is terrific. She's 17, cute as a button and as assiduous an attender of practice sessions as we've got. She's not much of a ballplayer yet–got a little problem with fielding and hitting–but, boy, is she suited up! From cap to spikes, she is, like, regulation, as classy-looking a ballplayer as any team could hope to find. Gwendolyne makes everyone else look so shabby that there is already talk of real uni-

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forms for the rest of us. Will it make our play any better? Well, no, not really, but at least it will make us Coyotes–yup, that's our name now, the Coyotes–feel good. Morale is flying high in Bourron-Marlotte.

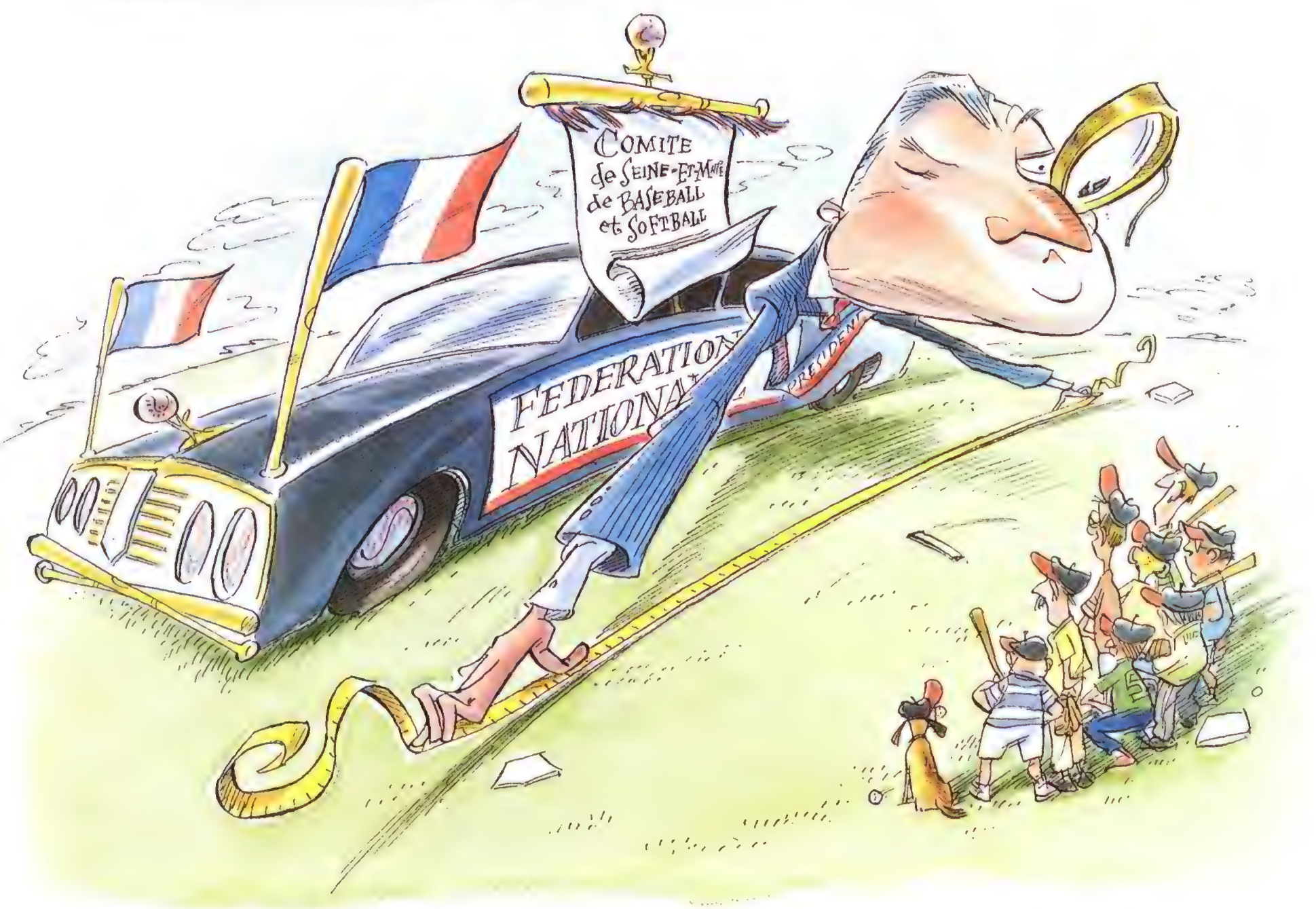
"You know, I already regret all the time I spent playing soccer," confided Christian Lasalle, an engineer from the nearby town of Montigny-sur-Loing, who has become my star center fielder. "From now on, my Sundays are going to be chicken in the pot, pastis in the glass and baseball for the rest."

So, sports fans, it looks like good old Yankee cultural imperialism is winning again. Thanks to Jean-Pierre's machines we now have regulation-size base paths, surfaced with white, fine-grain Fontainebleau sand. Running from first to second feels a bit like plowing through a snowfield, but that's all right–it tends to even up the odds a little more in favor of Stephane, whose looping throws from behind the plate weren't getting many base-stealers out. Mayor Margerie has promised us a real backstop to replace our tomato netting, and baseball's strange rules are finally beginning to sink in. Jean-Pierre and I are even talking about acquainting the Coyotes with the infield fly rule by next spring. We'll hold off on the balk until later. Everything in its time.

We edged closer to perdition–I could distinctly hear a rumbling from the east as De Gaulle turned in his grave at Colombey-les-Deux-Eglises–when, last autumn, we were visited by the president of the Comité de Seine-et-Marne de Baseball et Softball. He inspected our field, pronounced its dimensions satisfactory and solemnly explained the various procedural papers we would have to file in order to be officially received into the Fédération Nationale. I was astonished to learn that such a body even existed, but I shouldn't have been. As the world's most centralized state since Imperial China, France has *fédérations* and *comités* to oversee every imaginable activity, even one as relatively esoteric as baseball.

Anyway, we'll be getting real bases, a home plate and a pitcher's rubber soon, along with the *agrément* (recognition) of the state, insurance coverage, licenses and little plastic cards from the Fédération that formally identify us as ballplayers. That makes it official, I guess. I shall be pleased to flash my card at the doubters and mockers next time I return on vacation to the States. Now what I'm waiting to see is which one of my students will be the first to start chewing tobacco.

Because this was France, one of the most centralized countries in the world, the Bourron-Marlotte team was soon subjected to inspection and approval by state *fédérations* and *comités* that oversee every activity.



TOM SEAVER

Gardener, Baseball Hall-of-Famer

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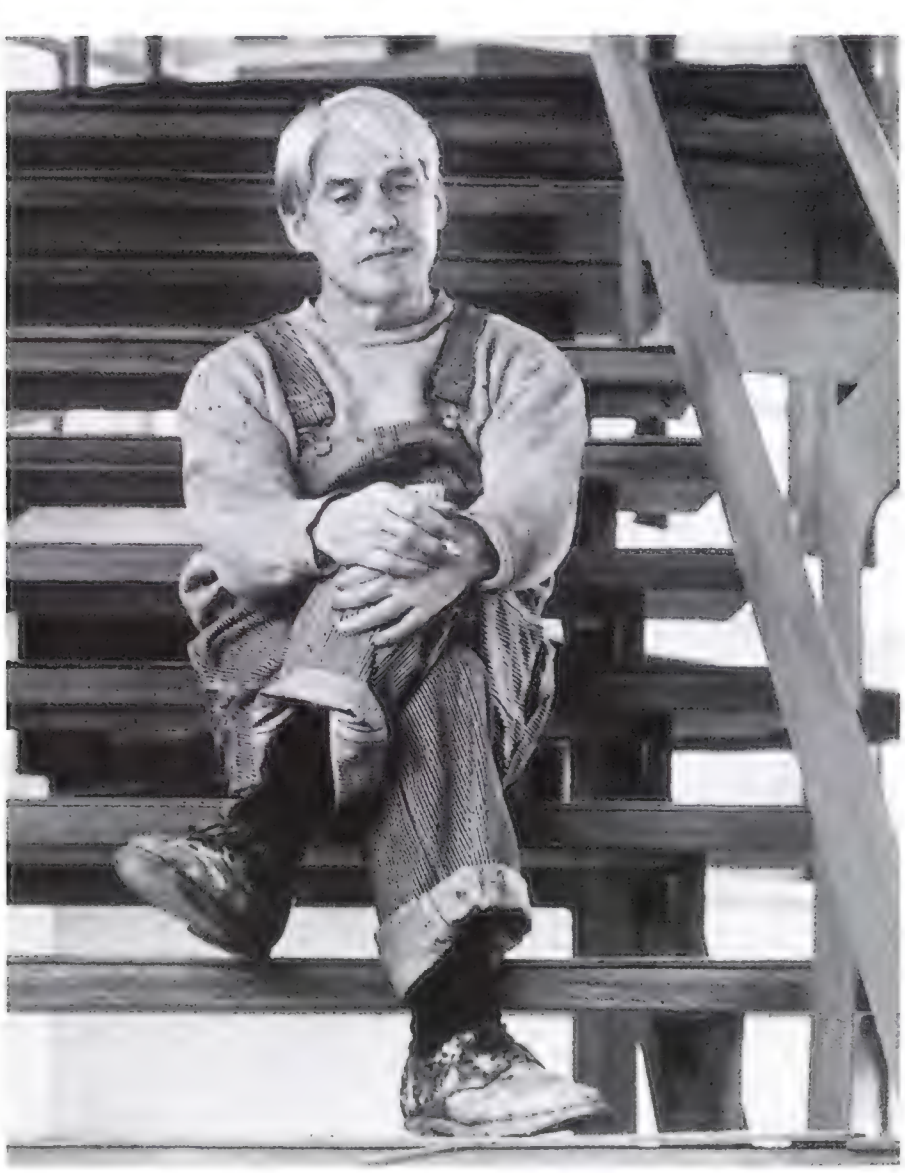
By Bennett Schiff

For de Kooning, painting has been 'a way of living'

Arriving in America as a stowaway in the 1920s, the young Dutch artist threw himself into the pure, raw joy of brush on canvas



Willem de Kooning–here, in his studio in the 1960s–turns 90 this month; *Seated Woman* (opposite), 1940, bristles with pent-up energy amid its fine balance.

The initial encounter with America of Willem de Kooning–a stowaway fresh off a ship in a strange land–was an instant love affair. As he and the country celebrate his 90th birthday this month, the mutual admiration has lasted for six decades. During that long time, in which this country saw the birth of the first major, independent, plastic art form in its history, de Kooning, who was there at the beginning–who helped to make the beginning–emerged as the closest thing we have to a Living National Treasure.

The new art form was, and still is, most commonly known as Abstract Expressionism, but that label doesn't begin to describe all of it. It has also been called Action Painting, which takes in only a part of it, and the New York School, which is perhaps the best description because it embraces the wide variety of its styles, some of them distinctly opposite to one another.

Because of its force, vitality and originality, the new painting can be likened to another indigenous American art form–jazz. If one could objectify visually, for example, a Ben Webster or Lester Young or Charlie Parker solo, one might, very reasonably, come up with a de Kooning canvas or, on an opposite visual scale to de Kooning, one by Mark Rothko, also a founding member of the New York School. The subject is pure emotion, held together with a fluid, skeletal structure of clean improvisation, a free-fall drop into the unconscious.

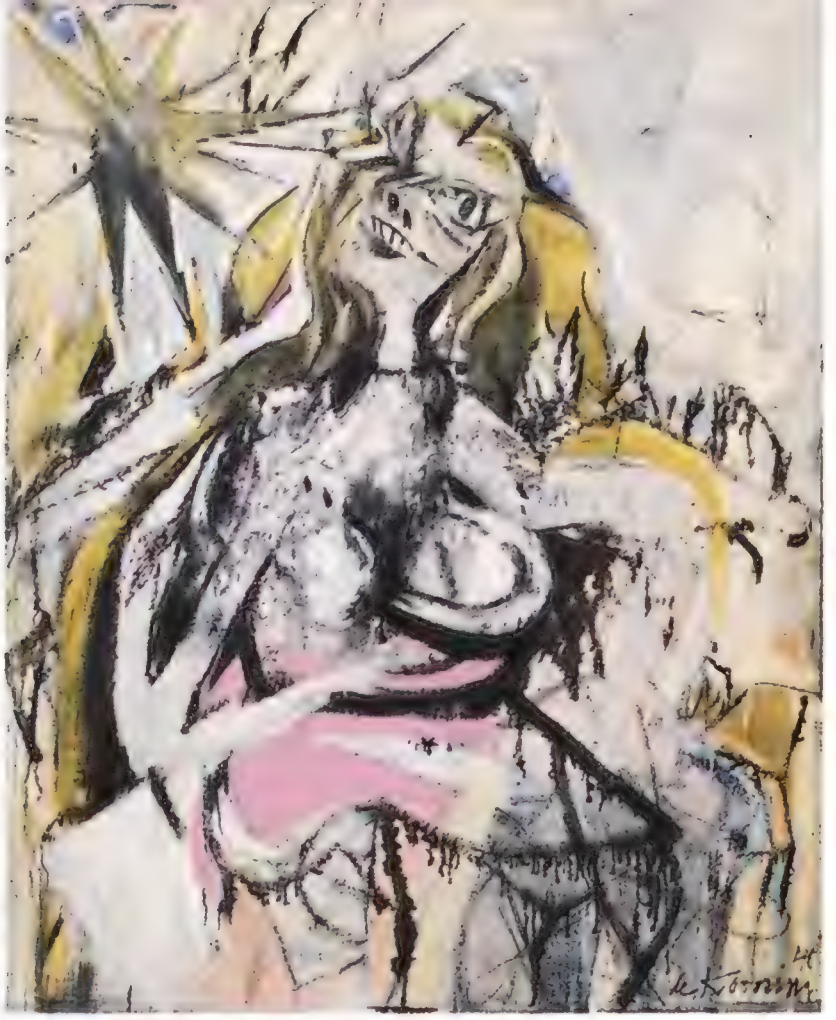
For the Abstract Expressionists, it was Freud and Jung and, later, the cataclysm of World War II that precipitated the new art. It had begun simmering in the late 1930s, got under way in the early 1940s and by the early '50s had a full head of steam. When the International Council of the Museum of Modern Art, in 1958, sent abroad the artworks of 17 painters of the New York School, they fell like a revelatory bombshell on artists in Europe. Soon after, the center of world art shifted away from Paris and came to rest in New York City. Some years later de Kooning stressed: "It's not so much that I'm an American. I'm a New Yorker."

A bit of Holland on Long Island

He was, in fact, about to change that. In 1963, he moved to eastern Long Island near East Hampton, an area that was drawing more and more artists to its sweeping spaces of lowland, sky and sea. "Any style of painting. . . is a way of living today, a style of living. . .," he had said; and it helped, after the frenetic city years, to have a comfortable home and studio in a landscape that reminded him of his native Holland.

Here, in the little community of Springs, Willem de Kooning lives today. Looking like a glass-walled warehouse, the studio he designed and built was a perfect environment for making paintings; but now, stricken by Alzheimer's disease, he is no longer painting.

Philadelphia Museum of Art



De Kooning takes apart traditional female nude in *Woman* (1948), disturbing with her staring eye and teeth.

Both: Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden

The gray light and fragmented signage of the city are captured in *Zurich*, an oil and enamel work from 1947.

By the time de Kooning had his first one-man show, at the Charles Egan Gallery in 1948, he was very much part of the scene. He had appeared in a number of stellar group showings, including one in 1942, which included Bonnard, Braque, Stuart Davis, de Chirico, André Derain, Matisse, Picasso, Modigliani, Lee Krasner and Jackson Pollock. This brilliant constellation of modernists had been chosen by John Graham, an aristocratic Russian expatriate artist and theoretician whose perceptive eye had a decided effect on the art of the time. De Kooning's ascent, beginning in the late 1940s, was rapid; and since those pioneering days, whether his work has been admired or hated among artists, critics, curators, dealers and the public, he has been a continuing presence. I have felt that presence since the '50s when, as an art critic in New York, I got to know the artist and his work.

Abstract Expressionism itself, as a movement, is over. It lasted from roughly the late 1940s until about the early '60s, a shelf life of some dozen years or so. That isn't so short a lifetime for art movements of the modern age; Impressionism lasted about the same amount of time and Fauvism less. Futurism, Dadaism and Surrealism flashed and cooled out, while Orphism went by in the blink of an eye.

And, in America, we have had in quick-time march: Op, Pop, Minimalism, Conceptualism and Magic Realism. For a while something called Patternism fluttered by; more recently, they are talking of Deconstructionism. Not to worry. Painting itself will continue as it has from the beginning on the walls of caves.

A grand master's movement of one

During all of this, decade after decade, de Kooning himself has remained a grand master of what has evolved into his own movement of one. Despite the revisionists who have already begun to load up for a kill, it seems destined to last as a strong force in our cultural history. "Personally," he wrote in 1951 in an essay on abstract art, "I do not need a movement. What was given to me, I take for granted." There was however, such a thing as a one-man movement, as in Marcel Duchamp, which was all right "because it implies that each artist can do what he thinks he ought to–a movement for each person and open for everybody."

Now, to pay tribute to the artist, who was born on April 24, 1904, two of the country's shining museums–the Smithsonian's Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden and the National Gallery of Art–have mounted survey exhibitions of his work.

The Hirshhorn offering is made up of 50 works from its own extensive collection. Among them are sculptures that Joseph Hirshhorn–whose collection formed the core of the museum that now bears his name–acquired

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Margulies Family Collection

"Even abstract shapes must have a likeness," de Kooning said of the biomorphic abstractions in paintings such as *Fire Island* (1946). Here the imagery is sexually charged, the lively shapes suggesting cavorting body parts.

directly from de Kooning during what became a fast and binding friendship. There is a fascinating record of that friendship in the form of a series of intimate letters, which have been reproduced in the show's fine catalog. It was written by Judith Zilczer, who also curated the show. The Hirshhorn exhibition is currently traveling; after a stop in Barcelona it will be at the High Museum of Art in Atlanta (September 13-November 27), then at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston (December 10 to February 19, 1995) and the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (March 19 to May 28, 1995).

The National Gallery exhibition, which will open on May 8 and continue through September 5, is an intensely focused survey of the artist's major work from 1938 to 1986. Its 84 paintings were culled from museums and private collections in this country and Europe; three key works came from the Hirshhorn. After a stop at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City, where it will be on view from October 6 to January 8, 1995, it will go to the Tate Gallery in London.

The last work in the National Gallery show dates from 1986; some time after that de Kooning's output slowed down, until he stopped painting altogether. His wife, the painter Elaine de Kooning, whom he had married in 1943 and from whom he had been separated for many years, had returned to look after him. "Bill was always home base," she said. When Elaine died in 1989, his daughter, Lisa, and his lawyer, John L. Eastman, applied to the New York State Supreme Court to have de Kooning declared incompetent to manage his affairs. They were eventually appointed conservators of the estate.

It is of considerable value. Estimates of the inventory of unsold paintings in 1989 were in the neighborhood of $300 million. (In November of that same year a 1955 de Kooning painting, *Interchange*, smashed the record for the highest price ever paid for the work of a living artist when it sold at auction for $20.8 million. It was not the only one that had gone into the multimillions.) In addition, his holdings in real estate, cash and securities were valued at more than $7 million. De Kooning, who

Contributing Editor Bennett Schiff wrote most recently on Amedeo Modigliani, in the January issue. He profiled Surrealist René Magritte in September 1992.

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could never quite believe it, had become a millionaire many times over. Yet, aside from the relief of not having to worry about money–he had had his landlord-at-the-door times along with so many of his fellow artists–it didn't make that much difference in how he lived.

Once he had it, and could buy all he wanted of the paint and canvas of the best quality–the one and only area in which he cared to splurge–anything else having to do with money seemed to be of little interest to him. In 1982, at the premiere at the Kennedy Center of a documentary film about de Kooning, the film's narrator, Dustin Hoffman, mentioned an astronomical price brought at auction for a de Kooning painting. To the amazement of the audience, the artist's distinctive voice, marked by his flavorful Dutch accent, rose in the dark and still theater: "Jesus Christ!" it shouted in disbelief.

"I didn't intend to be a painter–that came later"

In fact, by then there had been many such prices, but the mention of them was still a shock to the artist–a shock that is understood when one recalls that he was penniless when he arrived in 1926 at the age of 22. Yet, never has anyone fit into a time and a place more easily, taking what was offered and giving back in full measure. He had not, remarkably enough, come to America with the idea of being an artist. As he told the English critic and writer David Sylvester in a famous 1960 interview broadcast on the BBC, which was later widely reprinted, "I really intended to become an applied artist. I mean, it was more logical to be a designer or a commercial artist. I didn't intend to become a painter–that came later." America, as he saw it, was a place in which if one worked hard a person could get on well in the world, "while art, naturally, was in Europe." To his delight, he soon learned different.

De Kooning had a natural way of getting along with people, a kind of easiness, an unforced kind of common touch that is not at all that common. Not the least of these qualities was his openness and his ready wit and humor. He worked very hard, often obsessively; but he also knew how to have a good time.

Three days after checking into the Dutch Seaman's home in Hoboken, New Jersey, he found work as a housepainter at the grand salary of $9 a day. He found work, too, as a commercial artist; but on discovering to his dismay that housepainting paid better, he went back to it. In time, he began painting more seriously, supporting himself by doing odd jobs. "So I styled myself an artist and it was very difficult," he said. "But it was a much better state of mind."

It is important to note that de Kooning was a thoroughly trained professional artist when he arrived in this country. He had, for eight years as a night student, undergone the rigorous training in Rotterdam, his birthplace, at the Academy of Fine Arts and Techniques. At age 12, he had been apprenticed to a firm of applied arts decorators. By the time he emigrated, he was an impeccable draftsman; he had mastered lettering, carpentry, gilding, marbleizing and wood-graining; and he had studied art history and theory.

He counted himself lucky, he told the influential critic Harold Rosenberg in 1972, to have met in America "the three smartest guys on the scene: [Arshile] Gorky, Stuart Davis and John Graham. They knew I had my own eyes, but I wasn't always looking in the right direc-

Art Institute of Chicago

Title of densely packed, mural-size *Excavation* (1950) may allude to debris of Manhattan construction sites.

Such pictorial immediacy "became the hallmark of Action Painting," writes Hirshhorn's Judith Zilczer.

tion. I was certainly in need of a helping hand at times. Now I feel like Manet who said, 'Yes, I am influenced by everybody. But every time I put my hands in my pockets, I find someone else's fingers there.'"

In the mid-1930s, at the height of the Depression, de Kooning spent a productive year and a half working for the Works Progress Administration, an experience that provided an adequate income while broadening his acquaintance with many other artists in the same boat. Artists in those days were a sort of economic underclass; they didn't have much money, and their expectations were modest. They hardly expected to actually sell work. It was enough to keep at it, hoping for inclusion in a gallery show and notice in a newspaper or art magazine. But being an artist was a calling, busy and exciting and meaningful.

It could also be tragic. Arshile Gorky, the graceful, immensely talented emigrant from Armenia, Mark Rothko and Philip Guston–all pioneers of the new American painting–ended their remarkable careers as suicides, as if, in the end, they had aimed their paintbrushes directly into their own hearts. Careers such as these, art historian Jack Flam has pointed out, "can be seen as representative of many of the conflicts that affected the avant-garde American artists of the 1940s–perhaps the last generation that was able to consider being an artist a heroic undertaking without feeling self-conscious about it." As de Kooning has said, being an artist then was a way of living. Sometimes, even if the art worked out, the way of living did not.

"I'm not poor. I'm broke"

But most of the time it did, in the sense of a warm, communal feeling that existed among the artists. "In those days, nobody bought any art," the sculptor Ibram Lassaw recalled at a panel discussion held last fall at the Hirshhorn. "We were all broke. I remember de Kooning saying, 'I'm not poor. I'm broke.' No one had telephones. We just dropped in on one another." At the same event, artist and teacher Louis Finkelstein recalled how artists sought out each other's company. "There was a sense of community in which de Kooning was in the forefront," he said. There was a need, "in the most touching sense," to exchange ideas, and de Kooning was "distinctive in his openness and charity to other artists."

In the mid-'30s, cafeterias were the meeting place of choice; coffee was 5 cents a cup and you could talk and keep warm. As writer and poet Edwin Denby recalled, "Rudy Burckhardt [the photographer] and I kept meeting Bill at midnight. . .and having a cup of coffee together. Friends of his often showed up, and when the cafeteria closed we would go to Bill's loft. . .and talk some more and make coffee. . . ."

A dozen or so years later, the scene had shifted; there had been a decided breakthrough. A number of the artists had gallery representation, and their work was increasingly known to museum curators. Critics such as Clement Greenberg and Harold Rosenberg, known collectively among the artists as the "Artbergs," were immensely influential; their essays came forth as if from the Mount itself, and were treated as if they had been carved in stone.

The communal scene had shifted from cafeteria to bar, chiefly the Cedar Street Tavern in Greenwich Village, which the regulars called the Cedar Bar. This was

Los Angeles County Museum of Art

In works of the late '50s, including *Montauk Highway*, brushstrokes are broader and freer; color is stronger.

Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden

The turmoil of his earlier paintings is no longer seen in de Kooning's late works, such as *Untitled III* (1981).

an ordinary watering hole, which is what the artists liked about it. No pictures hung on the walls, which were so neutral in color–a sort of institutional corridor-green–that they attracted no attention at all. Nor were there any tourists. To be sure, in time the tourists would come, along with the art history students and doctoral candidates; but by then the artists had left. A high-rise apartment building now stands on the site. The Cedar, now a couple of blocks uptown, is not the same.

Many artists and other locals dropped in every night or so, always sure of meeting a friend or making one. I lived in the area and I often dropped in myself. The food was good café fodder and cheap and, at 2 A.M., helped to sober one up. Bill de Kooning usually stood at the bar, frequently with Franz Kline by his side. Kline told terrible jokes, which he and his buddy invariably found uproariously funny. Guston was often there, and many others now mentioned in the histories of the time. Jackson Pollock, by then living in the Hamptons, might drop in while in New York. The tale is told that, one night, he tore the door off the men's room. Enough regular customers insisted that they saw it happen so that you are right to believe it or not.

Leo Castelli, the art dealer–these days the renowned art dealer–would be there rubbing shoulders, a charming and gentle man. And also on hand, with her blinding wit, was that percipient and wicked novelist Dawn Powell, so admired by Edmund Wilson and Gore Vidal, both of whom, years apart, wrote long appreciations of her still generally unknown work.

Powell published a novel, *The Golden Spur*, which was her name for the Cedar Bar. The man on whom the main character of her book was based, Peter Martin, was there, too. It was Pete Martin who had said to me one night, speaking of insomnia, "Every time I close my eyes the lights go on." A few years earlier, he had opened the famous City Lights Bookshop in San Francisco, in partnership with poet Lawrence Ferlinghetti. Powell's book gives a good idea of the time and place.

Certain nights of the week the bar would be empty. The regulars would be uptown on 57th Street or along Madison Avenue for openings, for a look at what was being done, for drinks. There would be parties afterward and, at some time or another, the crowd would converge on the Cedar for the rest of what remained of the night.

Going to an opening of de Kooning's recent work in those days–the early '50s to the early '60s–and seeing the paintings for the first time was a visual adventure of stunning force. Color, shape and texture exploded off

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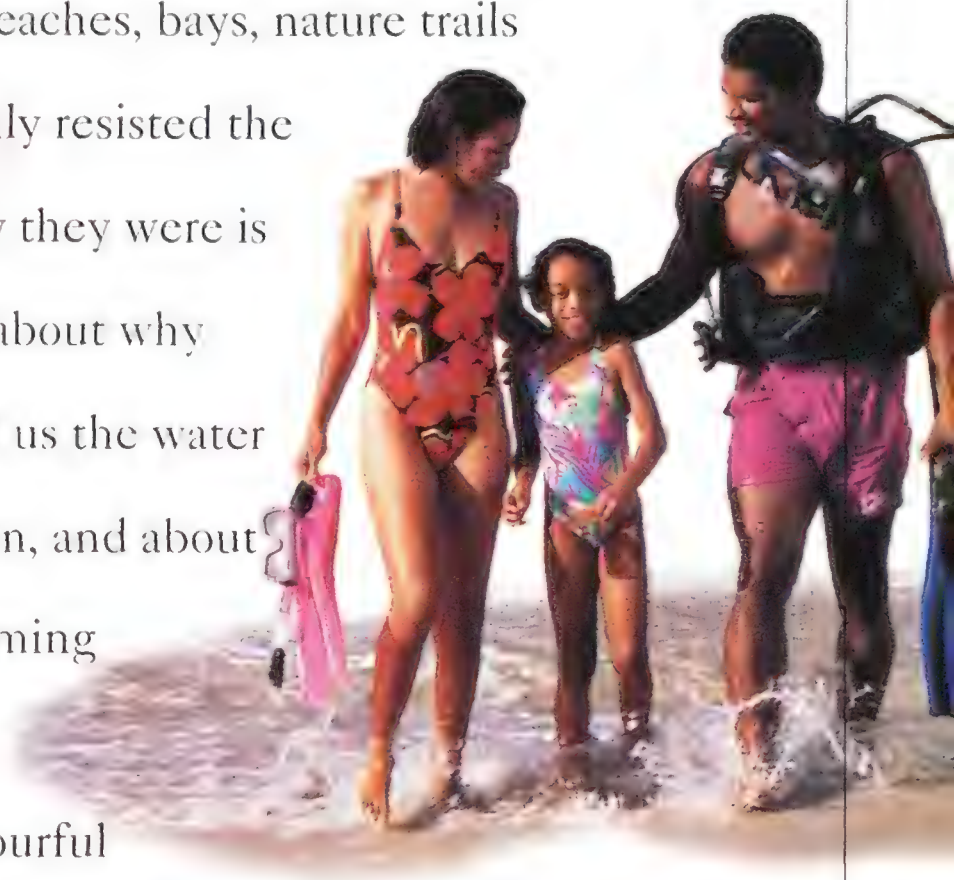

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THE BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS

the walls, hit me directly in the eyeballs and bounced around inside my head for some time afterward.

The landscapes were freakish combinations of furies; de Kooning blew up the canvas, holding nothing back. And they were done in the most delicate of colors–pinks, greens, yellows, oranges and blues–in tones and hues I hadn't imagined before. Spread out before the viewer was an elemental force that was still lovely and sweeping and, yes, lyrical. No one else had done that.

In this kind of painting the artist is working for himself, sorting things out, looking around, searching. So why should what he does, seeking his own salvation perhaps, be of interest to us? Because, if he is good enough, he is excavating a deep wellspring of emotion, a common one. The result can reach others in the way that a certain slant of light or a soft lake at night can.

It is the ability of such artists to reach a communicable area of human experience that makes their work worth looking at and, when the artist is someone of real stature–no one can say why some rare ones are and most are not–the work can be inspiring, maybe disturbing, joyous and lasting. Now, decades later, these paintings still blaze and breathe on the wall.

De Kooning, time and again, would be the first to point out that he was an eclectic painter, generous and open in his admiration for so many artists, living and long dead. He looked deeply at, and was influenced by, the work of El Greco, Soutine, Rubens, Mondrian, Miró, Giacometti. In his earlier work, one can see distinct references to Matisse and Picasso. And, also, to Roman wall paintings. He frequently said that where he came from was no secret: it was Arshile Gorky. And, he also said, it was Jackson Pollock who broke the ice. And yet, when you see a work by de Kooning, you know it is from his hand. His brushstrokes are, in their way, fingerprints.

"That's Bill's, isn't it?" Franz Kline once said, pointing to a painting on the wall during an interview with the poet Frank O'Hara in 1958. "You can always tell a de Kooning," he added, "even though this one doesn't look like earlier ones or later ones. It's not that style has a particular look, it just adds up."

Unlike the other artists of the New York School, de Kooning never deserted figurative painting. Although much of his work was entirely abstract, he had begun painting figures of men and women in the late 1930s. He continued to paint his famous and disturbing series of women for decades afterward, combining women with landscapes in the '80s.

The depth and quality of de Kooning's work is evident in the National Gallery exhibition; from his works of the early '40s–portraits of anonymous men and women done in daring pinks, oranges, hennas, blue-greens and salmon tones; to the comparatively little-known black-and-white and white-and-black enamel paintings of the '40s; to the sweeping, air-filled cityscapes of the '50s; and on to the landscapes of Long Island and the late paintings, which are pared down, space-filled exercises in incandescence punctuated by bejeweled colors.

These last paintings have been compared by some art historians and curators to the late works of Titian, Monet, Picasso and Matisse as examples of a kind of a revelatory awakening, a sort of summing up of a lifetime of experience; and some would agree with them. Despite faint traces of imagery and shape, however, they are nothing like any of his previous works. It would be wonderful to have Franz Kline, who died much too early at age 52 in 1962, comment on these.

Barbaric heraldic banners of furious beauty

Of all de Kooning's works, and for reasons that are obvious to anyone who sees them for the first time, it was his series of women that raised the most commotion. He began the first series in 1938 and kept returning to the subject for the next 50 years. In a way, the women look like barbaric heraldic banners, images that large armies on foot might fly to frighten off the enemy. And they have a kind of furious beauty as well; hardly pretty, they are, rather, aggressively sexy, electrified.

For all of his long painting life, Willem de Kooning has sought the elusive, to catch a glimpse of something worth noting, to paint the glimpse, the feeling that the glimpse sparked.

"I look out of the window, and it happens over there. Or I can sit in a chair, sit and think. That's the beginning–and I find myself staying with it, not so much with this particular glimpse, but with the emotion of it," he once said.

Perhaps, what he was looking for was not transformation so much as transfiguration. We don't know whether he's found it. We like to think he has. We see signs of it in his best work. He can't tell us.

Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam

A sailboat makes its way across the turbid center of the 1977 seascape *North Atlantic Light*. After the artist moved from New York City to Long Island, in 1963, his subjects also shifted from urban to pastoral ones.

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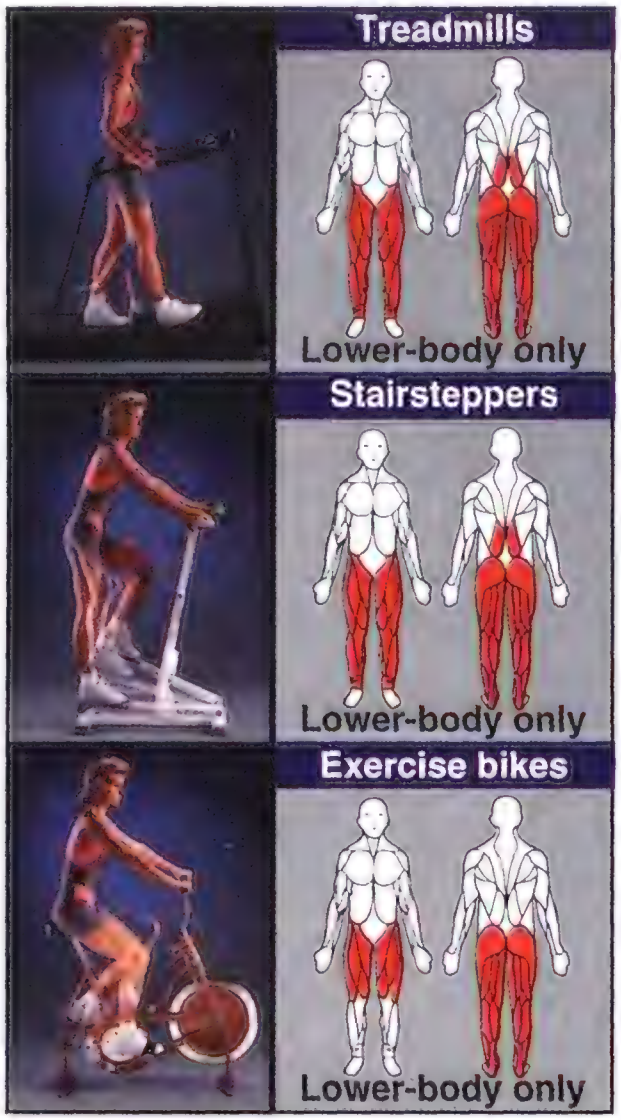

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Would you want to live in this dump?

The National Association of Home Builders created this handsome, comfy Colonial–but wait till you see what it's made from

It's got 3,600 square feet, four bedrooms, two baths, two powder rooms and a two-car garage. And it would look right at home in any upscale subdivision where prices run in the high $200,000s. The National Association of Home Builders Research Center, which erected it in Bowie, Maryland, formally calls it the "Resource Conservation Research House." Less formally, it's known as the "Garbage House."

Step inside and it's the stuff dream dwellings are made of–a wood-burning fireplace, spiffy track lighting, a Jacuzzi in the master bath. In fact, you're treading on a high-priced scrap heap. You're also walking into the future, for the entire place, subflooring to attic, amounts to one inspired riff on the theme of recycling and energy conservation.

And tomorrow, according to those farsighted folks at the Research Center, is just around the corner. As old-growth forests dwindle, the price of lumber is skyrocketing. Energy costs will soar. And landfills are going to be maxing out all over.

Do not fear: Garbage House is here. The frame is steel, most of it recovered from junkyard cars and dismantled bridges. (An added bonus: termites and carpenter ants are foiled forever.) The siding might look like ordinary clapboard, but it's really made of sawmill wastes and wood chips. And a layer of insulation sandwiched beneath that siding contains 20 percent recycled polystyrene packaging.

Then there's the nifty solar collector beside the deck in the backyard. It's fitted with a solar panel (heating 80 percent of the house's hot water) and a photovoltaic panel that powers the landscaping lights and the security system, and provides backup electricity should a power failure occur.

The interior holds its surprises too. Overhead ceiling tiles contain recycled newsprint. The double-paned windows are state-of-the-art energy efficient. Even the heat pump is state of the art, drawing warmth from the earth via copper pipes buried under the lawn.

And that's only the beginning–you'll find even more innovations described on the following page. (Don't be surprised, though, if persistence is required to track down the house's environmentally friendly components: some products are prototypes, others are on the market but still not easy to come by.) Meanwhile, hug a tree–or even a spotted owl or two. No doubt about it–build your life on garbage and we'll all be better off.

Richard Wolkomir

Turning trash into the roof over your head

The Garbage House construction crew takes recycling to new heights: as children frolic on a swing set that doubles as a backyard solar collector (1), workers load polyethylene grocery bags (2) into a hopper to make sidewalk paving blocks. Old copper plumbing (3) emerges as new gutters and downspouts; wastepaper (4) is transmuted into mulch for the yard, while newspapers (5) are reincarnated as wall insulation. Auto parts scrap (6) assumes a new identity as steel framing. And up on the rooftop, discarded computer housings (7) are transformed into resin-compound shingles. The final wizardry is worked in the attic, where all of the construction waste (8) is collected in three dumpsters for–you guessed it–recycling.

7.
6.
5.
4.
3.
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Hannibal, shown in Renaissance style, crossed Alps in 218 B.C. bringing Second Punic War to Italy with some 6,000 cavalry, 20,000 infantry and only a few of the 37 elephants he'd had when setting out from Spain.

His armies roamed Italy for 15 years, often beating Romans, but finally were obliged to return to Carthage.

By Robert Wernick

Dido was its old flame, and Hannibal called it home

But the ancient city of Carthage is still being rediscovered, bit by bit, 2,100 years after the Romans thought they had expunged it

When the ancient Romans thought of Carthage, the picture that came to their minds was of fire. They had all heard of the terrible brazen image of Ba'al Hammon, which dropped infants from its red-hot outstretched arms onto blazing altars. They had heard of Hamilcar, the commander who, after losing all but one of his 251 vessels in a fight with Syracuse at Himera, built a fire and jumped into it. They had heard especially of Dido, the queen who founded Carthage, and how, when she saw her faithless lover Aeneas sailing off on his divine mission to found Rome, built a pyre on the beach, stabbed herself and plunged into the flames.

The Dido story was Virgil's version; Aeneas sees the dark pillar of fire from the deck of his ship. Other accounts follow what is most likely an older tradition of the Dido story. Half-myth but perhaps half-history as well, it tells how a princess of the Phoenician port city of Tyre named Elisha (Elissa in Greek) flees the city after her brother Pygmalion murders her husband. With a group of Tyrian aristocrats and a cache of gold, she reaches a Tyrian colony on nearby Cyprus called Qart Hadasht, or New City. They rescue 80 virgins from ritual prostitution at the temple of Astarte, and then head westward in their ships. Sailing when the winds are favorable but mostly rowing along the north coast of Africa, they come to what is now the Gulf of Tunis and find a superb site for a settlement. It offers a fine natural harbor near a promontory that can easily be defended against attacks from the mainland, and is an ideal place for trade, strategically located at the narrowest part of the Mediterranean Sea.

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Here Elisha gets a new name, Dido (meaning, says one ancient author, "the Wanderer"; meaning, says another, "husband killer"). She founds a second new city, the Qart Hadasht twisted on Greek and later Latin tongues to become Carthago.

Mythic and scholarly consensus holds that all this happened sometime around 800 B.C. Some 650 years later, in 146 B.C., when the Romans, after more than a century of sporadic though savage war by land and sea, finally conquered the city Dido founded, they destroyed it utterly, letting fires rage for ten days until not one building was left upright.

"Great Carthage made war three times," Bertolt Brecht once wrote, summing up seven centuries of Carthaginian history. "After the first, she was powerful. After the second, she was rich. After the third, no one knew where Great Carthage had been."

The last phrase was a slight exaggeration. Everyone had heard about Great Carthage, and about Hannibal and his elephants crossing the Alps in 218 B.C. to start the Second Punic War

Self-immolation of Dido, after Aeneas departed, put a Roman spin on history.

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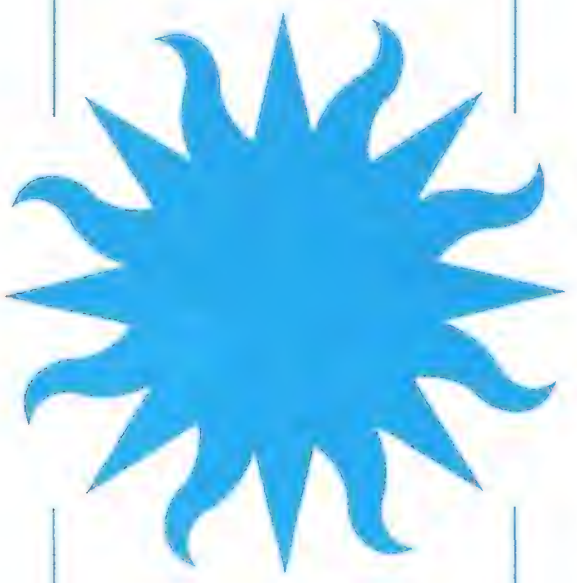

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Famed Carthage naval base included huge circular sheds that housed more than 200 war triremes, each one poised on its own launching ramp.

with Rome ("Punic" comes from the Roman word for "Phoenician"). It was, after all, Roman history. Everyone knew where Great Carthage had been because the Romans built a city of their own on the site, a new Carthage that became a center of industry, learning and luxury, arguably the second city of the Roman Empire. But until less than a century ago, no one had any real idea of the size of the original Punic city, its boundaries, its layout or its architecture.

It was only in 1921 that a local public servant and an archaeologist named Count Byron Khun de Prorok tracked a shady trafficker in classical antiquities and caught him digging up funerary stelae in the adjacent countryside, now part of the modern seaside resort of Carthage. Their discovery led to the unearthing of thousands of urns and tombstones. The urns held the bones and ashes of infants who had been ceremonially burned in the place to which scholars have given the name of its counterpart outside biblical Jerusalem, the tophet. It is only in the past 20 years that archaeologists, working as part of a ten-nation international team directed by UNESCO (SMITHSONIAN, February 1977), have proved that a nondescript, brackish pond by the shore of the Gulf of Tunis was once the military port where 220 warships of the Carthaginian navy could be sheltered in covered slips and drydocks. Nearby they found traces of the great commercial port as well.

For more than a century archaeologists had been digging into the Byrsa Hill, which tradition held to be the center of old Carthage, in the hope of finding some trace of the magnificent temples and palaces that ancient authors say once crowned it. Every time they were sure they had come upon a wall of its most celebrated monument, the temple of the god Eshmoun (whom the Greeks and Romans identified with the god of medicine, called Aesculapius by the Romans), their triumph turned to dust as the masonry was shown to be Roman. Only the gigantic work undertaken since 1972 under UNESCO has at last dug up the reason for their failure.

The Byrsa excavations have revealed the appalling extent of destruction at Carthage. The Romans left the black-

The author writes frequently for SMITHSONIAN. *His last article was on Conspiracy Theory (March 1994).*

ened ruins alone for a century and would not let anyone live there. (They did not, however, sow salt into its soil, as all the schoolbooks say. Salt was valuable; and anyway, the work of scattering it would have taken thousands of man-hours). That story got its start in 1902 when Professor B. L. Hallward, in the *Cambridge Ancient History*, compared Scipio Aemilianus, the Roman commander in the Third Punic War, to Abimelech in the Old Testament (IX Judges 45) who took the Canaanite city of Shechem "and slew the people that were therein; and he beat down the city, and sowed it with salt."

In 44 B.C. Julius Caesar decided to build a new city on the site of the old, but he was killed before the plan was fully developed. Eventually, to make sure that no vestige of the old city remained to pollute this creation, Emperor Augustus had the Byrsa Hill decapitated, lowering its summit by 16 feet or more to make a ten-acre plateau on which to lay out a proper Roman city. More than 245,000 cubic meters of earth, rock, masonry (including the foundations of the temples of Eshmoun and Apollo/Reshef), were

Stone columns and grid are the remains of ramp used to berth a single warship.

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Map includes Tyre, where Dido originally came from, Spain (New Carthage), the Alps and Cannae, the site of a great victory by Hannibal over Rome.

hacked out and either used as landfill or spilled down the sides of the hill.

Digging into the remains, UNESCO teams have cleared about four city blocks in what appears to have been a prosperous neighborhood, with apartment houses constructed around central courtyards, a few shops, paved streets, sewers, and cisterns for collecting rainwater. According to one Roman author, some of these buildings were six or seven stories high. But nothing is left of the buildings but fragments of ground-story walls, dwarfed into insignificance by the immense pillars the Romans raised to hold in place the city they were building. Beneath the ancient Roman road that led from the Byrsa Hill to the sea, a German team of archaeologists, led by Hans Georg Niemeyer of Hamburg University's Archaeological Institute, has recently unearthed remains of Punic housing that date back as far as the eighth century B.C.–the time of the legendary founding of Carthage.

A current show devoted to the arts of ancient North Africa, on view through May 29 at Emory University's handsome new museum in Atlanta, has a Carthaginian section assembled from a collection in the Louvre. The rich variety of objects illustrates the cultural crosscurrents–from Egypt, from Syria, from Greece–that naturally swept through the greatest trading center of the ancient world.

There were once great libraries of books in the Punic language. Not a

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page, not a line, remains. The works of a Carthaginian named Mago, the greatest agronomist of antiquity, were translated and studied by Roman landowners, but now even the translations are lost. What remains of the language, a variety of the Phoenician spoken in Tyre, a near relative of ancient Hebrew, are mostly grave inscriptions (some 6,000 of them) with the names of parents offering children to Ba'al Hammon, or the goddess Tanit, and some lines of comic dialogue put into the mouths of Carthaginian merchants and slaves in the work of a Roman playwright.

One consequence is that practically

Scipio Africanus, Rome's top soldier, got name by winning in North Africa.

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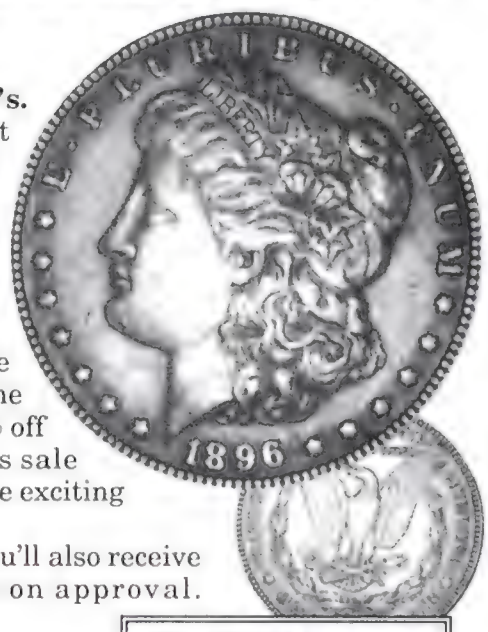

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everything known about the Carthaginians comes from the Greeks and Romans, who made war on Carthage for centuries. Their historians naturally tended to present a biased picture of the enemy as cruel, untrustworthy Orientals. This was the picture touched up with lurid highlights by Gustave Flaubert, whose novel *Salammbo* portrays a Carthage of glittering opulence and unspeakable vice, where rivers of Oriental perfume mingle with rivers of blood from torture chambers and infant holocaust. Flaubert had sometimes the soul of a naughty schoolboy; he was never happier than when offering such tidbits as the claim that high-born maidens used a paste made of crushed flies' legs to touch up their eyebrows. But there is no reason to think the people of ancient Carthage were any more addicted to cruelty than the Romans, who thought nothing of crucifying prisoners along the public highways and leaving them there till their bones were picked clean by birds. Some scholars challenge the whole idea of Carthaginian infant sacrifice, claiming that the charred bones in the urns, when they are not those of

Punic head, made of molten glass, was used as an amulet or worn as jewelry.

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lambs and calves, are of infants who were stillborn or died of natural causes. But tophet excavator Lawrence Stager, director of Harvard's Semitic Museum, thinks there is no doubt that some form of infant sacrifice took place. According to the gloomy prophet Jeremiah, the custom was being practiced in Jerusalem in the sixth century B.C. The early church father Tertullian, who spent most of his life in North Africa, wrote in A.D. 200 that "to this day that holy crime persists."

At one time or another, Rome fought with many of the other peoples of the Mediterranean world, occasionally taking cruel vengeance, but eventually absorbing them into the Roman state or making them allies. Only Carthage was utterly destroyed, because it was the only foe the Romans genuinely feared, the only trade rival that might have supplanted Rome.

From 262 B.C. to 146 B.C. these two

Residential quarter unearthed at Byrsa Hill shows that in second century B.C. Punic culture enjoyed houses solidly constructed on a rectangular grid.

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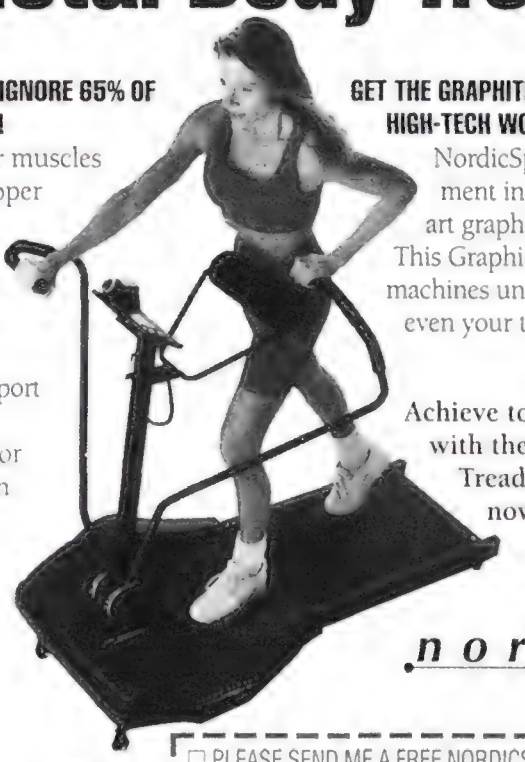

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states, which started out as small towns, groped and then clawed their way toward mastery of the known world. Sometimes the story of those centuries sounds like a dress rehearsal for modern times. Just as the expansion of the Western European world began in the 1400s with Portuguese captains pushing their solid oceangoing ships farther and farther down the coast of West Africa in search of gold, spices and slaves, so the Phoenicians, 2,400 years earlier, at the beginning of the first millennium B.C., developed sturdier, faster ships than had ever been built before and began sending them on trading or raiding voyages to what was then the wild west end of the Mediterranean. Homer's *Odyssey* (dated by current scholarship to the latter part of the eighth century B.C.) describes them as "pirates in black boats laden with a thousand *arhythmata*," that is to say, beads and bowls and wine and metalware and all sorts of bric-a-brac. The Phoenicians traded for produce of the iron mines of Elba, the gold mines of Andalusia and later the tin mines of Cornwall, growing rich on such commerce (SMITHSONIAN, August 1988). They also invented an alphabetic script, which made it easier to keep business records.

For hundreds of years the competition was fierce between Phoenicians and island Greeks, mainland Greeks, Sicilian Greeks and the Etruscans of western Italy, where Aeneas and his Trojans landed. They all established trading posts or spheres of influence scattered over hundreds of miles of coastline; the posts became commercial ports and sometimes fortified cities. The cities made alliances, propped up satellite states, quarreled over tariffs and monopolies and eventually fought "world" wars. By the fifth century B.C., Rome (which had expelled the loosely confederated Etruscans) and Carthage (which had long outgrown its mother city of Tyre) were emerging as superpowers.

They were briefly allied against the Greeks, then came to blows in 264 B.C.

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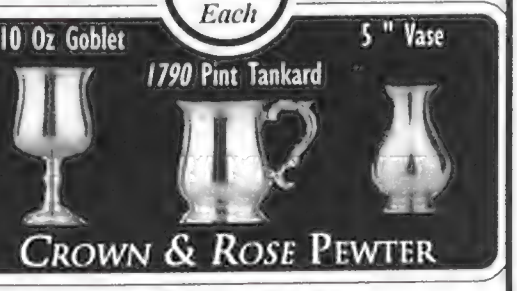

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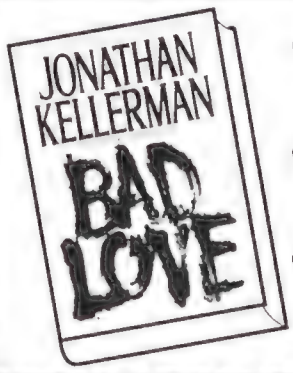

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and over the next 118 years fought the three Punic Wars for the domination of the world. They were complex wars on a scale unknown before, bringing into play vast amounts of weaponry, strategic movements of fleets and armies over hundreds of miles of water, the juggling of alliances and the large-scale hiring of mercenaries.

At first the Carthaginians took command of the sea with big battleships–98-foot-long triremes with tusk-shaped timber battering rams on their prows. When a ship was propelled at full speed by three banks of oarsmen (as many as 170), it could ram and sink an enemy vessel. Carthage even developed a quinquereme, with five banks of oars, though no one in modern times has figured out how such a complicated conveyance could operate in real water with real rowers.

After salvaging a wrecked Punic trireme, the Romans were soon building their own. Then, since their sailors had not enough experience to sail them as well as their enemies, they

Stele depicts Tanit, most likely a mother goddess, holding a caduceus.

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came up with an innovation that revolutionized war at sea. It was called the *corvus*, or crow, a special boarding bridge at the bow of the ship that could be lowered onto the deck of an enemy vessel alongside. At its end was a heavy piece of iron with a sharpened point like a crow's beak, which would fasten onto an enemy deck like a grappling hook. Then naval war became land war–which the Romans were good at–as heavily armed Roman infantry, using the *corvus* as a gangplank, swarmed aboard the enemy vessel and massacred its crew.

At Mylae in 240 B.C. in the first Roman naval victory of the Punic Wars, the *corvus* pecked the Carthaginian fleet to death. In the peace that followed the ensuing Roman victory that ended the First Punic War in 241 B.C., Carthage lost some of its overseas empire. It also found itself with 20,000 mercenaries still on its hands in Sicily, mostly wild Gauls, Numidians, Iberians, black Africans and Mauretanians. Having to pay a huge tribute to Rome for the next 50 years because Carthage had lost the war (our more enlightened century speaks of "reparations"), the Carthaginian senate did not see its way clear to pay the mercenaries what they had been promised. Gisco, the commander in Sicily, proposed sending them back a few boatloads at a time so that the senators could negotiate a mutually agreeable sum with each group. But someone (an MBA from the Punic School of Business Administration, perhaps) persuaded them that they could make a better deal by settling on a lump sum payment for the whole force, and the 20,000 were shipped back together. A child could have predicted what would happen when all those fierce, fully armed men, camped just outside Carthage, learned that they were going to be shortchanged. They started a spree of burning and killing that lasted for three years and almost destroyed the state.

Defeat only sharpened hatred of Rome. Hamilcar Barca, leader of the Carthage war party, built up a new em-

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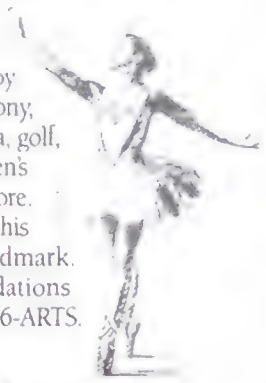

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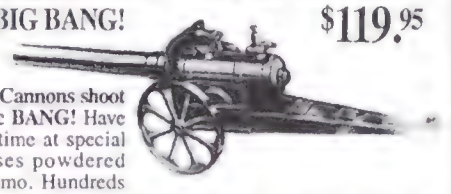

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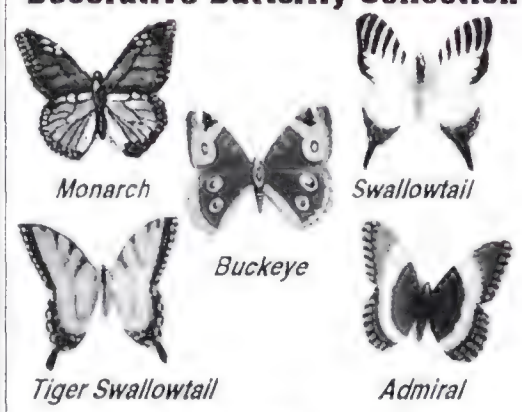

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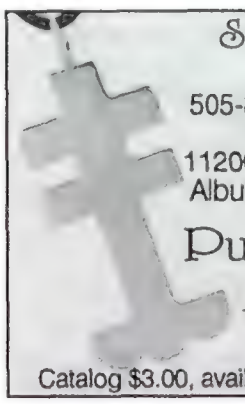

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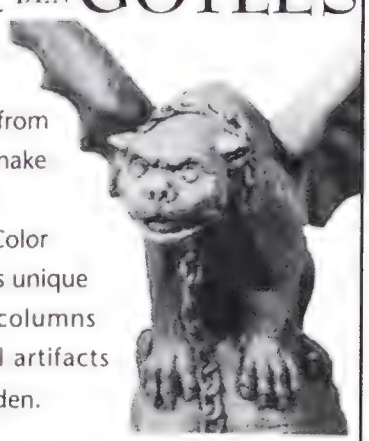

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Cato the Elder railed at Carthage for its wealth and military preparedness.

pire among the old Phoenician colonies in Spain, where he founded a "New Carthage," now Cartagena. Lacking the support at home to rebuild a navy, he created an army to challenge Rome on land. The Greek historian Polybius tells us that Hamilcar had his son Hannibal swear a solemn oath to be forever an enemy of Rome.

It was Hannibal who, at the age of 25, started the Second Punic War and began the campaign that led him to within a hair's breadth of destroying Rome and making Carthage master of the world. He came so close that, for generations, Romans would exclaim "Hannibal is at the gates!" to express fear or anxiety. Hannibal, the greatest of all captains, according to Napoleon, could not only outmaneuver the Romans in the field, he could handle the logistical problems of moving a huge army and a horde of elephants through Spain and hostile Gaul and eventually over the Alps in winter, hoping to take Rome by surprise.

He tried to make strategic alliances and to plant fifth columns behind the Roman lines. He was a master of what today is called psychological warfare: the elephants, of which only a few survived the Alpine crossing, were of limited military value, but their image haunted every soldier's imagination as German Tiger tanks did in World War II.

Both sides used mercenaries, but in the 15 years Hannibal fought in Italy

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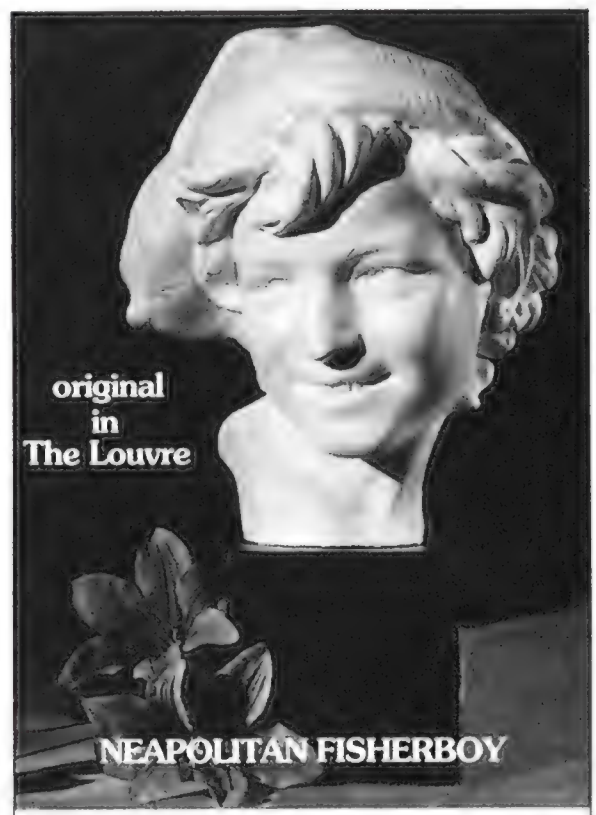

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he was steadily outnumbered because Rome could always count on a reservoir of sturdy patriotic peasants. Hannibal had mauled two numerically superior Roman armies, at Lake Trasimene and Cannae, but the Romans raised a third. In the end, Hannibal was called back to North Africa to help repel a counterinvasion led by Scipio Africanus, who defeated him in 202 B.C. at the Battle of Zama.

The Roman historian Livy records how Hannibal, after the loss of the Second Punic War, rebuked the rich senators who had watched with dry eyes while their country's navy was towed out to sea and set afire under the draconian terms of the peace treaty, but began to wail and tear their clothes when they learned that there was so little gold in the national treasury that the yearly tribute would have to be paid out of their own pockets.

Military disaster did nothing to break the entrepreneurial spirit of Carthage. While the taxpayers of Rome were pouring out gold along with their blood to expand and police their empire, the Carthaginians, reverting to their primal role as Levantine traders, were shamelessly prospering. Cato the Elder, sternest of the noble old Romans, on a diplomatic mission to Carthage in 175 B.C. to make sure that the provisions of the peace treaty were being honored, was horrified by all the bustle and industry he saw around him. To his eye the city was "teeming with a new generation of fighting men, overflowing with wealth, amply stocked with weapons and military supplies . . . and full of confidence at the revival of its strength." Cato thenceforward added to every speech he made in the senate on any subject the words "*Delenda est Carthago*"– "Carthage must be destroyed."

One group in Rome was perfectly willing to go on living in peaceful coexistence. But a war party was in power in the year 149 B.C. when the Carthaginians gave Rome a pretext to act by repeatedly taking up arms to repel the Numidians who were seizing their

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lands. Roman forces were deployed, and the Third Punic War was launched. The Carthaginians, who were in fact ill prepared and fearful, soon agreed to hand over 600 hostages to guarantee their good behavior and braced themselves for another heavy tribute. The Romans first insisted that the Carthaginians surrender every instrument of war in the city. Two hundred thousand weapons and 2,000 pieces of artillery–catapults and ballistae–were duly loaded on wagons and delivered.

Only then were the rest of the impossibly harsh conditions of surrender revealed: Carthaginians must abandon international trade, leave their city and build another at least ten miles inland from the coast. It would be for their own good, the Roman consul Censorinus piously told them, for had not the sea brought them all their woes? Only their temples and tombs would remain undesecrated.

For a people who had lived almost 700 years by overseas commerce, this was a decree of forced suicide. All Carthage united in passionate defiance. The gates of the city were closed, arsenals were improvised and soon were turning out 300 swords and 500 spears a day. Women cut off their hair to make braided ropes for catapults. The Romans had expected a quick surrender by the disarmed foe. They were slow to assault a city with a triple line of walls extending for some 22 miles. The highest wall reached 65 feet and was 98 feet deep, with space dug into it sufficient to stable 300 elephants and 4,000 horses. It took the forces of Rome, eventually commanded by Scipio Aemilianus, three years just to breach the walls. Then they had to fight their way, street by street and house by house–including the streets and houses whose remains can still be seen (p. 133)–crossing from housetop to housetop on beams that straddled the 15-foot-wide streets, stopping occasionally to allow troops of street cleaners to clear off the dead bodies and rubble.

Polybius served as a Roman staff officer in Carthage. He left an eyewit-

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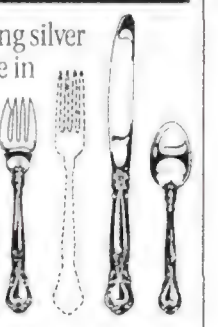

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ness account of the slow, bloody climb up the Byrsa Hill. With all Carthage burning in front of them, he was amazed to see Scipio with tears in his eyes. He was recalling, Scipio said, the lines of the *Iliad* in which Hector has a premonition of the death of his country: "The day shall be when holy Troy shall fall, and Priam, lord of spears, and Priam's people." When Polybius asked him why he would be thinking such thoughts on a day like this, Scipio answered: "Oh, Polybius . . . I feel a terror and dread, lest someone someday should give the same order about my own native city."

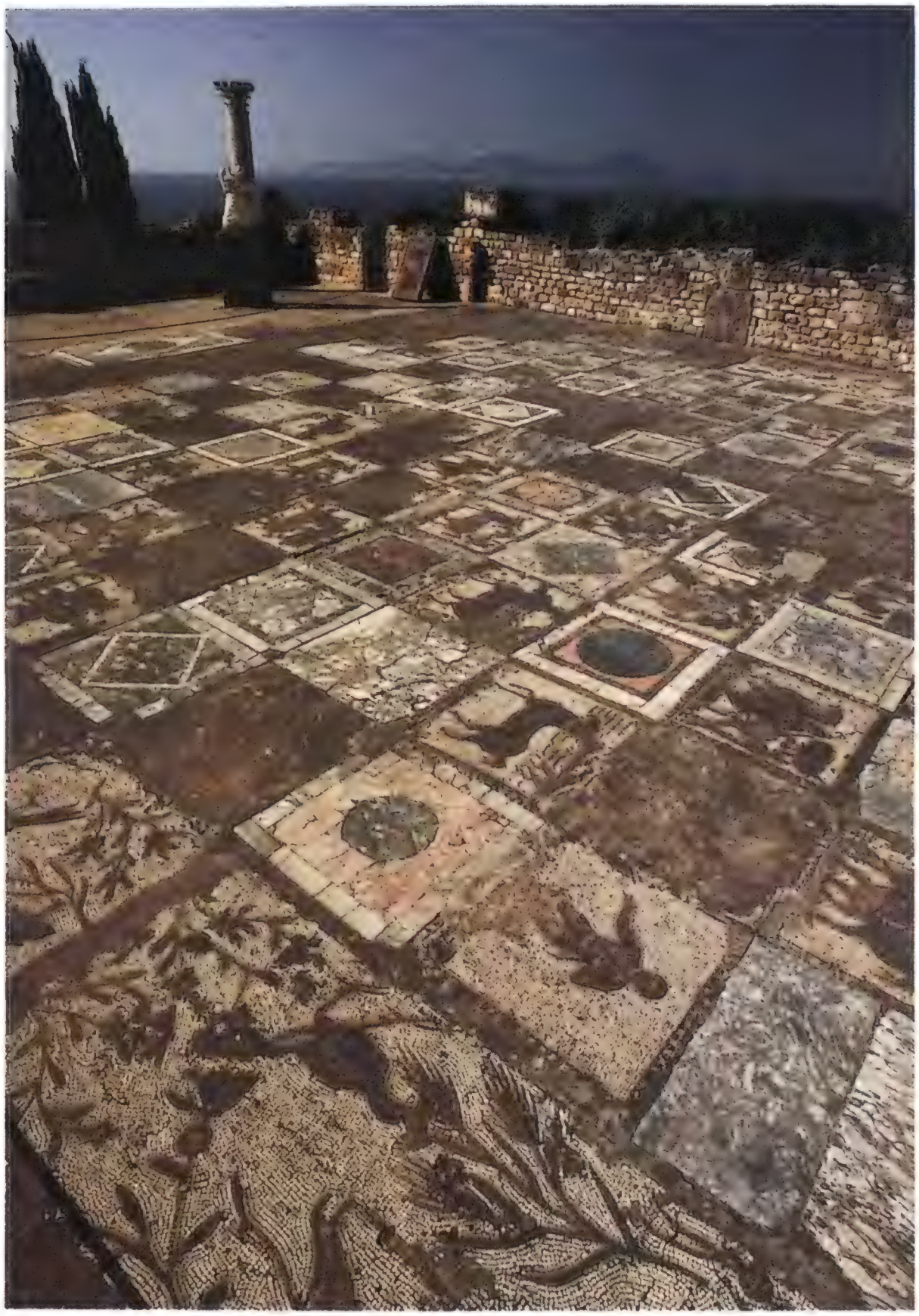
It took many centuries for Scipio's premonition to be fulfilled. Roman arms would ensure peace and prosperity to millions for hundreds of years. By supplying wheat, olive oil and wild beasts for the arena, the province of Africa created out of the Carthaginian homeland would become the most prosperous in the empire. Traces of it remain everywhere in today's Tunisia. You cannot drive long in any direction without coming across the ruins of a Roman town, provincial places with elegant theaters, temples and forums. Between the broken walls of their homes, as well as in the vast chambers of the Bardo National Museum in Tunis, you can see acres and acres of mosaic floors–jolly hunters, piping shepherds, frolicking deer, amorous gods in all the rich, colorful gaiety of Greco-Roman art in its happiest years.

Roman dominion in Africa ended with the Vandal incursions of the fifth century A.D., Byzantine dominance in the sixth century, and the arrival of a wave of Semitic invaders, the Arabs, in the seventh century. The latter preferred to build new capital cities of their own, first at Kairouan, then at Tunis. Gradually, the Roman city of Carthage was drained of people. Its palaces and temples and mansions provided a quarry from which pillars and hewn stones could be carted off for the monuments of the new masters of the land. Most of what was left was taken off by raiding parties of Italian sailors and used to

build the churches and palaces of Genoa and Pisa.

The ancient Carthaginians would have preferred their way–a quicker and less-agonizing death. At the end of the six-day battle for the Byrsa Hill, 50,000 Carthaginians marched out to give themselves up and be sold into slavery. Everyone else in what had been a city of several hundred thousand souls was dead, except for a desperate handful clustered in the temple of Eshmoun, resolved to die rather than surrender. At the last moment the Carthaginian leader Hasdrubal lost his nerve and left the temple to grovel before Scipio, begging for his life. His wife, Sophonisbe, dressed as for a feast, was standing on the wall of the temple, which was burning behind her. She howled down a curse upon Hasdrubal for his cowardice, seized her two little sons in her arms and jumped into the purifying fire.

After destroying Carthage, Rome covered it over with stately, columned temples, and mosaics like the floor of this third-century A.D. villa.



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Book reviews

Word Play: What Happens When People Talk
Peter Farb
Vintage, $12

The Inuit, it is frequently observed, have multiple words for *snow.* Of course they do. For people who live in a world of frozen water, it is important whether the stuff around them is wet or dry, powdery or granular, slushy or solid. When nuances are important, people will find words to describe them.

It is interesting, then, to list the words for "ways of speaking" that Peter Farb uses in a single paragraph of *Word Play,* his classic treatment of language and the ways we use it. *Chatter, grumble, argue, mutter, implore, pontificate, question, inquire, comment, utter, say, express,* and finally, paradoxically, *remain silent* all appear in one paragraph of this elegantly argued book. Nor is English unique in having such a plethora of terms for talk. If vocabulary reflects significance, it would seem there is no activity more important to human existence than speech.

Speech is so familiar, so commonplace and quotidian, that we can use it without thinking. Yet it is astonishingly complex. English, for example, contains more than a hundred thousand words created out of a scant three dozen or so individual sounds. Words can reward a speaker with status and wealth, win a lover's heart or get somebody killed. Speech is so subtle, flexible and powerful that by comparison, writing–the keystone of civilization–appears clumsy and imperfect, "a pale reflection of the speech it is supposed to substitute for."

Farb approaches this immense subject by focusing on four broad topics. First, what are the ground rules that control our

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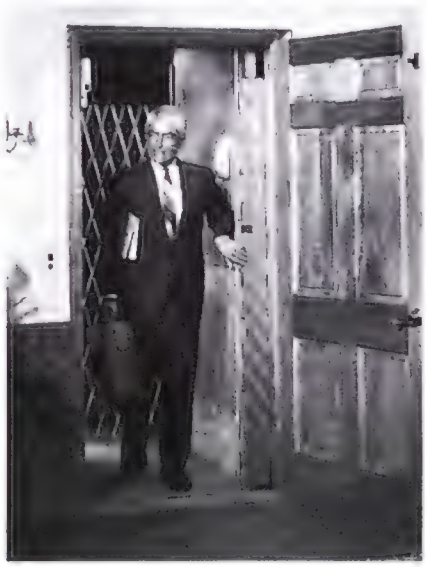

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use of speech? Second, what strategies are available to a speaker operating within a particular linguistic system? Third, how do the rules and strategies of a given language restrict the way a person thinks? Finally, how did language–a system of communication that literally defines the condition of being human–evolve?

These topics are the subject of several academic disciplines, and Farb's own specialty, anthropological linguistics, provides many of the examples he uses to make his points. His style, however, is remarkably free of the jargon and convoluted language that infect so much professional writing. The book has but one footnote (explaining why there aren't any other footnotes), and the author even makes fun of what he calls *Educanto*, the schoolmarmish practice of saying "Academic achievement is not commensurate with individual ability" in place of the "unpleasant-sounding Anglo-Saxon 'The child could do better.'"

Indeed, the author's entire approach is built around examples. He describes playing with words by quoting dialogue from a Marx Brothers movie. He defines the ecology of language as the environment of social, historical and physical conditions that restrict and control the choices of a speaker, then clarifies this generalization with a slew of specifics. We, for example, say *light* or *dark* when asking for chicken because a century ago proper ladies were not supposed to hear words like *breast* and *leg*. Such tidbits do more than delight our modern sensibilities–they are so memorable as to tattoo Farb's ideas onto our consciousness.

"Name-calling is not good-natured and children do not grow out of it; as adults they merely become more expert in its use." This is as clear and concise a statement as a reader could hope to find. But Farb makes it real by using what is clearly a bitterly recalled parody of his own name (the harmless *b* converted to a *t*) among the examples of how children ridicule their fellows.

In explaining nonverbal speech, the author reveals the different ways to signal *yes* in the Punjab, Ceylon or Bengal. The power of unspoken communication is conveyed by the story of "Clever Hans," a horse who learned to count by reading cues from his human audiences.

Farb fixes the meaning of *pidgin* by noting that this word is Chinese pidgin for the English *business*. He reminds us of our own linguistic fixations by invoking a grammarian called "Miss Fidditch"

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and describing her lust for naming parts of speech, disgust with perversely split infinitives, and obsession with not using the same verb twice in a single paragraph. And no one who has ever strained to hear some notoriously difficult professor will forget Farb's description of *mumbling*–"a hostile act which defeats the listener's desire to understand what the speaker claims he is trying to say."

Word Play, reissued now in paperback, was originally published in 1973, and today some of the book's examples inevitably appear dated. Feminine words may still be used "to imply unpredictability or treachery," but "Andrew" reminds us all that hurricanes are no longer named exclusively after women. *Groovy*, *square* and *jive* may indeed be words that were imported from Black English, but now they just sound archaic. His points are still clear, but some of the examples are no longer alive.

But that does nothing to diminish our fascination with language, a fascination that in some cases–as in Shakespeare–has been elevated to genius. The Bard, Farb observes, "understood how people play a game with language to achieve certain ends: to cajole or convince, to display their own wisdom to an audience, to win honor or esteem."

Furthermore, it's a game only we humans can play because "man alone possesses the capacity to speak languages of such richness that linguists are still unable to describe them fully. Speech and man first appeared on the planet together, developed together, and when one disappears the other will also. Human speech is not merely some improved form of animal communication; it is a different category altogether that separates man, inhabiting the far side of an unbridgeable chasm, from the beasts."

The author's claims–such as "thinking is language spoken to oneself"–remain both elegant and controversial, and his eloquent yet playful style is pure delight. The intellectual fun begins with the paperback edition's cover–itself a visual pun in which the multicolored letters of the title and author's name remind us that in German, *farbe* means *color*. And as Farb sweeps toward his conclusion, that "neither language nor behavior can be understood without knowledge of both," his vision of what happens when people talk is as informative, entertaining and intelligent as it was 20 years ago.

John R. Alden is an anthropologist and book reviewer in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

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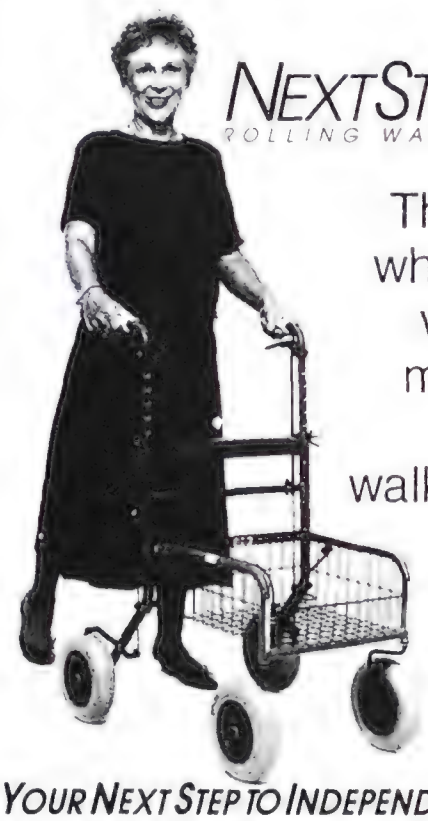

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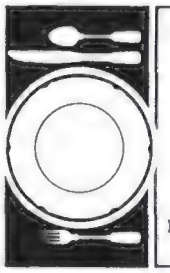
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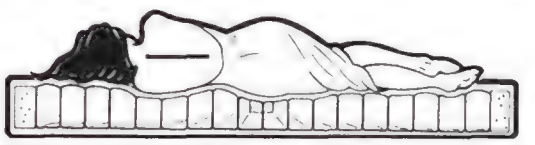
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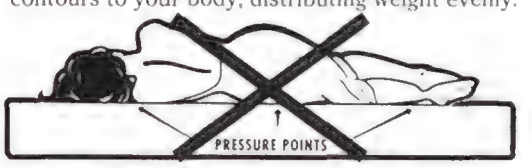

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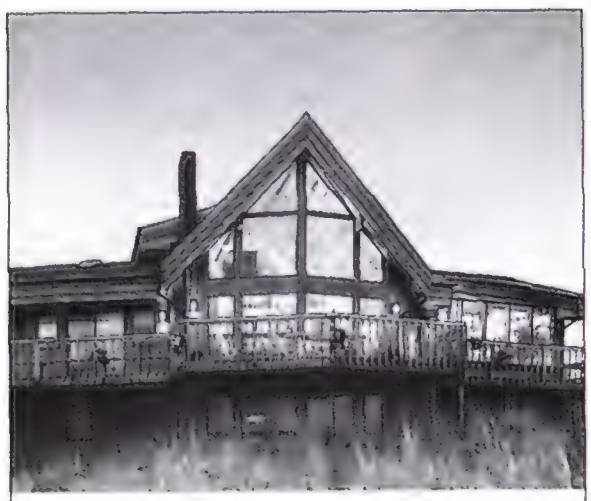

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fuel had a low flash point. I stayed under there and we smoked a cigarette apiece."

Brown writes about fires in the back of houses that melt telephones in the front, fires that melt the helmets of the men fighting them, fires that consume all the available oxygen and put themselves out, fires that kill without leaving a mark on their victims. What separates this book from the scores of other volumes in the ever-expanding genre of catastrophe literature is Brown's honesty, sense of humor and gift for language. Here, too, he writes about his ambivalence about hunting, his failings as a husband and a father, his view of life and death, and his long struggle to teach himself the craft of writing.

"I have chosen this thing to do, away from my family, the doors closed, characters who form in my head and move to the paper, black symbols on a white sheet. . . . It may seem senseless to anybody else, but I know there is purpose to my work: the spending of years at the typewriter writing until I become better than I am now. . . . I love this thing, even if it does not love me back."

Larry Brown never went to college. But he figured that learning to write might be like learning to build a house or fight a fire. His method was straightforward: "All I had done was stay in a room for ten years and write." This effort has paid off. In the cadence of his writing, you can hear the notes of another writer from Brown's hometown, William Faulkner. "You have to do something in your life that is honorable and not cowardly if you are able to live at peace with yourself, and for the firefighter it is fire. It has to be faced and defeated so that you prove to yourself that you meet the measure of the job. You cannot turn your back on it, as much as you would like to be in cooler air. . . . You have to stay huddled with the men you are with."

In the end, *On Fire* is the story of Larry Brown's journey from the past to the present, the tale of "the way two totally different careers had to mesh and make room for each other, until one of them finished first." Lucky for us readers, Larry Brown is no longer fighting fires in Mississippi; lucky, too, that he has taken the time to reflect on those years. *On Fire* will send you to the bookstore for his other stories–and to the kitchen to check your smoke detector.

Karl Ackerman's first novel, *The Patron Saint of Unmarried Women*, will be published by St. Martin's in May.

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Additional reading

Around the Mall (p. 16)

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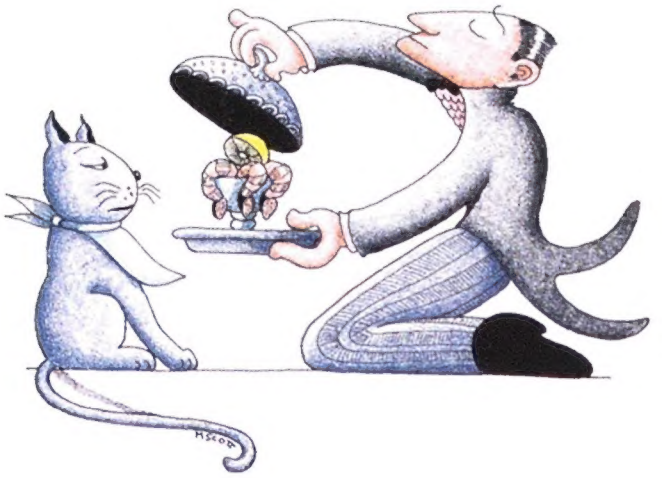
By Rudolph Chelminski

Let me confess my servile secret: whenever it comes to kitties, I kowtow



OK, listen up. We're playing hardball here. Straight talk. The subject is cats. Sorry, I mean kitties. The naked truth.

You know what people usually say about cats. It's always the same: I like them for their independence, they're not slavish like dogs, they're mysterious, they're clean, they know what they want.

Bull. That's just smoke screen stuff.

The plain truth is that cat people are born with an uncontrollable compulsion to be servile to fur balls with teeth. The condition is irreversible, probably genetic. There is no other possible explanation for their behavior.

Now that we've got that straight, we can get to the tough part: I am going to confess–in print, right here–just *how* servile I am. Other cat people will recognize this immediately, of course, even if they don't have the guts to admit it about themselves. We're all the same.

OK, first of all, they're not cats. We never say "cats." They're *kitties.*

"Some kitty you got there, dude."

"Damn straight. Killer."

"Wake you up much?"

"Sure, all the time. Gotta go out, gotta come in. You know."

"Yeah. How's he on food?"

"Terrible. Won't go near Mew-Mew. Usta like it. Changed his mind."

"Yeah."

We stand at attention for our kitties, of course, that's part of the deal. My present one–an exceptional animal, by the way–is, I would say, only slightly more tyrannical than the average. She yells at me if I'm late with her meals–that's only natural–but the hard part is keeping up with her whims. What I give her for breakfast is usually out of favor by lunchtime, and absolutely passé for supper, so I've got all these cans with two or three tablespoons skimmed off the top, the rest of which she refuses to eat. (Luckily, the dog's there. He eats anything.) She also has to have the dry stuff mixed in with the canned stuff, and the water right next to it. If I ever forget, you can imagine the looks she gives me.

I've been pretty lucky with the kitty sand. It doesn't seem to bother her too much if I'm late in cleaning it up. She just finds some other place. That's why I'm not late very often.

Bedtime is becoming a bit of a problem, though. She started out sleeping exclusively on me, but of late she's taken to alternating between me and my wife, so we don't really know which one of us she likes better (I'm pretty sure it's me, though). Her regular spot used to be where the covers formed a kind of trampoline between my knees, but that left her back exposed to the air, so she's gotten into the habit of trotting up over me at about 4 A.M. and moving in under the covers with my wife. Hard to blame her, even if it makes me feel deprived. It does allow me to turn over, though. She never permits me to turn over when she's sleeping on my side. That's harder than you'd think. Sometimes I get cramps.

Her name is RitRit, by the way (that's onomatopoeic, as you may have guessed), but we tend to call her WitWit because kitties need the reassurance of a certain amount of baby talk; that's a scientific fact. You shouldn't overdo it, though. When I discuss her menu ("Well, WitWit, what in hell *will* you eat if you won't eat that?") I have to be explicit. Any maître d' can tell you that.

Being in the service of kitties is a continuing lesson in tact. Take the matter of lap-sitting, for example. You are required to pretend it doesn't bother you when they demonstrate contentment by gouging furrows in your thigh, otherwise you're sure to hurt their feelings. (A discreet, inward "Ow!Ow!Ow!Ow!" is the limit.) Newspaper and magazine reading is a recurring problem because, of course, they want to be where the paper is–that is to say, on it. You can always lift the paper up and read with your head tilted back, but inevitably that leads to a crick in the neck. I've discovered that RitRit will sometimes accept an alternative position up on my shoulders rather than on my lap, but it never lasts long, and then when she decides to take off I really get the impact of those claws. So either way you're in trouble. But, hey, who ever said life was simple?

Now, as for the crucial question of interspecies communication, I have found that on many occasions it is useful to talk in kitty talk, that is, with your voice at a squeaky pitch in imitation of a cat's. (It's a good idea to check for the presence of strangers first, especially shrinks.) One can also break away from Standard English and actually say the classic "meow" sometimes. It goes over fine. I occasionally vary it with a deliberately cute Beatrix Potter "mew." RitRit enjoys irony and literary reference. (I am careful not to mention *The Roly-Poly Pudding*, however. That's just simple good taste.)

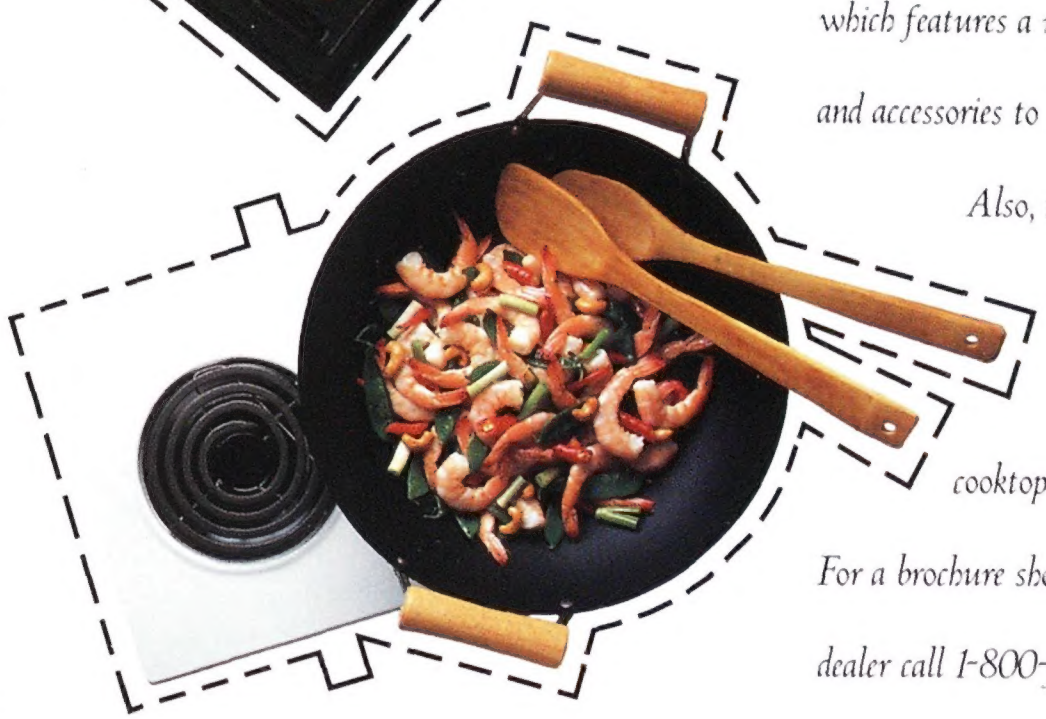
I could go into a lot more humiliating detail about the extent of my abjection, but I don't want to embarrass anyone. I hate to see people cringe–I think you get the idea. And in case you're wondering, the answer is yes, the Clintons are the same. Of course–they're cat people.

You might be interested to know that Bill and Hillary never really call their kitty "Socks." That's just the version they use for the press. Much too formal. His real name–and this is an exclusive scoop–is "Woxy," as in "Soxy-Woxy."

"Hillary, did you feed Woxy yet? He's hungwy, aren't you Woxy?"

"Widdle Woxy's hungwy? Are you, baby?"

"Just a minute, dear, I've got Moscow on the line. [Voice dropping back down to normal pitch] Hello, Bowis?"



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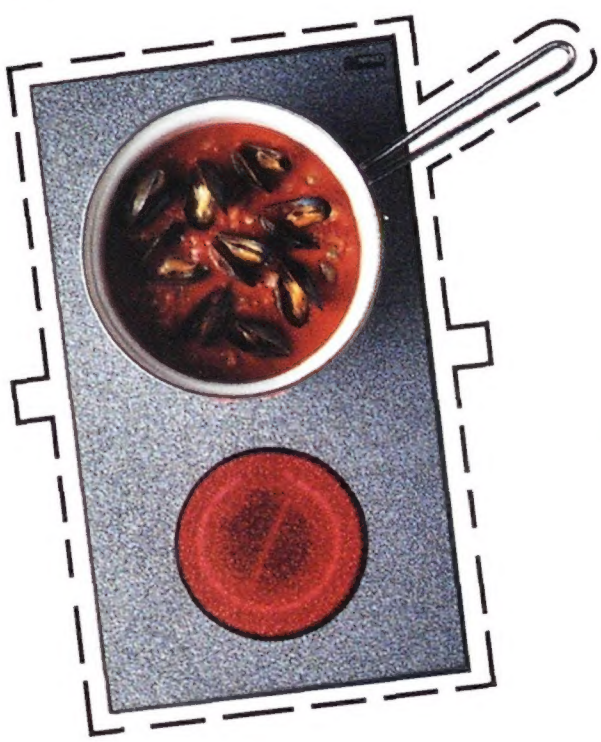

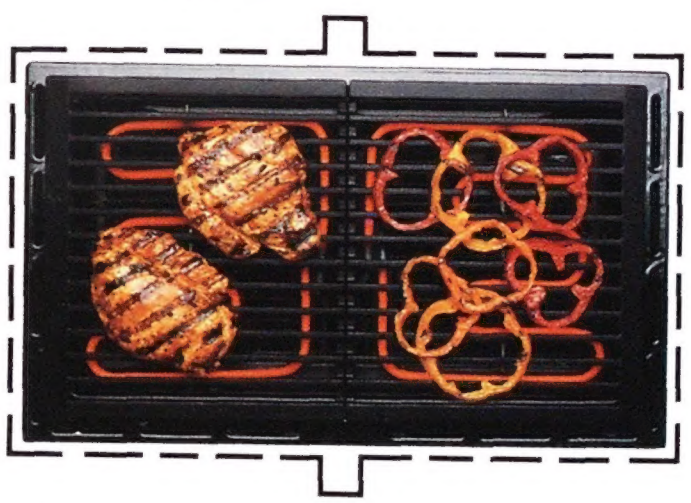

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